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THE

SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL

OF

SCRIPTURE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL OF SCRIPTURE:

BEING

ESSAYS ON SELECT PASSAGES OF SACRED COMPOSITION.

By Mr. PRATT,

AUTHOR OF THE POEM OF SYMPATHY, THE FAIR CIRCASSIAN A TRAGEDY, &c. &c. &c.

A NEW EDITION.

INSTANCES, ALSO, OF MAJESTIC SIMPLICITY AND UNAFFECTED GRANDEUR, ARE TO BE MET WITH IN GREAT PLENTY THROUGH THE SACRED WRITINGS.

Smith's Longinus.

LONDON:

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M DCC LXXXIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH,

THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL OF SCRIPTURE;

THE PUBLIC DELIVERY OF WHICH

WAS HONOURED BY HER PATRONAGE;

ARE NOW

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HER GRACE's

MOST OBEDIENT AND

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE miſcellaneous remarks were written in the animated moments of feeling, when their author was deſtined to holy orders, and while the impreſſion, made by each paſſage, was yet glowing on the imagination, and the heart.

They have now been in his poſſeſſion, or in that of his literary friends, ſome years; in the courſe of

of which, they have been handed about, with the moſt flattering attention, from one perſon to another, equally eminent for the juſtice of their criticiſm, and the delicacy of their taſte. A few years ſince part of them were delivered, publicly, at Edinburgh, before ſeveral of the moſt diſtinguiſhed literary characters, not only of Scotland, but of Europe. Amongſt theſe, might be named, a Hume, a Kames, a Robertſon, a Ferguſon, and a Blair.

Theſe honours, however, are none of them mentioned in the triumph of oſtentation; but, by way of apology to thoſe, who may deem an apology neceſſary. What hath been

ſo

ſo warmly received by ſo reſpectable an auditory, may reaſonably hope the approbation of the world in general: and what was at firſt written *profeſſionally*, and to diſplay the moſt excellent *matter* in the neweſt *manner*, cannot, ſurely, at any time, come abroad unſeaſonably, or be thought *out of character*.

Be it, nevertheleſs, noted, that, in theſe ſketches, minute points, of doubtful and diſputed explication, have been avoided; it by no means, being the ambition of this little volume to interfere with church controverſy. The genuine effuſions of the author's mind in the progreſs of peruſing the nobleſt compoſition in

the

the univerſe—indulging himſelf, now and then, in a moral comment upon paſſages of particular beauty; or, in a tender illuſtration of ſome of the moſt ſtriking and pathetic narratives, are now offered to the reader; in the hope of recommending, and ſtill of *more*, endearing to him the original.

Nor hath the aſſiſtance of former annotators been, in any degree, ſought or ſolicited on this occaſion; becauſe, having taken in contemplation the great volume of Truth, without *any commentary*, the author is willing to venture ſuch ſentiments as were excited, by an unaided ſtudy of the *tranſlated text*.

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It will, indeed, be ſeen, that the paſſages ſelected are, chiefly, ſuch, as have been ſlightly regarded, by the more ELABORATE commentators, and ſuch, as, appealing inſtantly to the paſſions and ſenſibilities, demanded a more lively and tender elucidation than is uſually admitted into ordinary comments.

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In the mean time, if his obſervations induce any reader to look into the BIBLE with a more cautious, or a more favourable eye, than he hath hitherto done; or, if any elegance is here marked, which had before eſcaped him, the publication will not be ſent abroad in vain, and the author will be moſt pleaſingly rewarded.

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ESSAY I.

CHAOS and CREATION.

PASSAGE.

AND THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM, AND VOID, AND DARKNESS WAS UPON THE FACE OF THE DEEP; AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD MOVED UPON THE WATERS.

THE true ſublime of language opens upon us in this paſſage. It is Truth arrayed in the decorations of oriental poetry. The earth was without form: it was the reign of Chaos and old Night; matter and motion were in the utmoſt diſorder; no diſtinction, no harmony, no regularity; all thoſe materials, which were preſently commanded to compoſe an according ſyſtem, were void. In this verſe, as through a mirrour, methinks I ſee this now delightful univerſe, in a ſtate of anarchy: I look, as it were, into the regions of the paſt, and am ſtruck with a view of

things, before the beginning. How wide, how infinite the confuſion! a promiſcuous miſcellany of atoms, and all the treaſures of a world tumbled together, without uſe or beauty. But the thick gloom obſtructs my ſurvey, and yet I behold, or *think* I behold, the mighty and immortal SPIRIT, moving upon the waters. The waters hear and obey; the mighty work of wonders is begun; let ſuch, therefore, as are able to feel the aweful ſcene exhibited in *this* verſe, indulge their admiration by reading the *next*, which diſplays at once omnipotence and benignity!

AND GOD SAID—LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT.

There is no reading this without a tremor of veneration: there is no thinking upon it, without aſtoniſhment! It is, at once, ſo amazing an inſtance of power and kindneſs, of tenderneſs and authority, that, one knows not which attribute moſt to reverence. It is one of the ſhorteſt paſſages in the whole Bible, exhibiting, at the ſame time,

time, the nobleſt image, with magnificence and ſimplicity: and, indeed, the beſt moderns have copied and imitated, at whatever diſtance, the graces of the ſcriptures. Thoſe authors relate actions which are to excite inſtantaneous admiration, by a ſingle line, and very frequently by a ſingle expreſſion. It was not to be ſuppoſed, that the ſubject before us ſhould eſcape poetical imitation.—Let us look at certain paſſages in ſome of our Engliſh bards, to ſee with what ſucceſs.—Milton takes the lead:

Let there be light, ſaid God, and forthwith light
Etherial, firſt of things, quinteſſence pure,
Sprung from the deep; and from her native eaſt
To journey through the airy gloom began:
Sphear'd in a radiant cloud.

Let us clear the road of criticiſm, as we go along. Is not this, at beſt, beating poetically, about it and about it? We confeſs, we feel, the ſcenery of *the eaſt*, the *airy gloom*, the *radient cloud*, &c. but ſtill, the ſecond verſe * is a verſe of mere epithets;

* Etherial, firſt of things, quinteſſence pure.

it delays the grand truth, which by ſuch protraction comes, at the end of a fourth line, three lines too late. The paſſage itſelf is in no degree laboured,

Let there be *light*, and there *was* light.

On the contrary, the *brevity* conſtitutes, here, great part of the beauty; nor can even the pen of the author of Paradiſe Loſt, atone for the fault of circumlocution in ſuch a criſis. The creation of the world depended only upon one word of the Deity; and Moſes hath deſcribed it in a ſentence. Language could not have been more compreſſed: meaning could not have been more comprehenſive. Milton, however, hath been very happy and compact in another part of his poem:

Confuſion heard his voice, and wild uproar
Stood rul'd;
'Till, at his ſecond bidding, darkneſs fled,
Light ſhone, and order, from diſorder ſprung.

But this is not, however, equally conciſe:

Cowley

Cowley ſays,

They ſung how God *ſpoke* out the world's vaſt ball,
From *nothing*, and from *no where*, call'd forth *all*.

This is too quaint: it looks like a witticiſm, a kind of conceited punning, upon *all* and *nothing*, *every where* and *no where*.

Pope's famous line,

God ſaid *let Newton be*, and all was *light*.

Is evidently borrowed from the noble paſſage under conſideration, but is a forced compliment carried to the border of impiety; and, when compared with the original, ſhrinks to nothing. What were the talents, philoſophy, or diſcoveries of Newton; or what his obſervations or experiments; what, indeed, the conſequence of the greateſt individual to the actual exiſtence, œconomy, and eſtabliſhment of *light*, of light brought inſtantaneouſly forth at the commanding fiat of the omnipotent? Read the paſſages together.

God ſaid, let *Newton be*, and all was *light*.
And God ſaid, *let* there be *light*, and there *was* light.

As there is no bearing the parallel, let us quit it. But, indeed, if Milton's genius could not maſter it, how vain to look for any thing equivalent in Cowley or Pope. It is altogether *inimitable*, and *incomparable*, being infinitely ſublime and ſacred in itſelf, and expreſſed in words exactly ſuitable. The ſentence conſiſts wholly of monoſyllables, and thoſe ſhort, ſmooth, and, as it were, inſiſting upon a rapid pronunciation. The celerity of the words, aſſiſt in, and echo to, the command they convey

Let there be light——

Can any thing flow faſter or with more facility from the lip ?

And there was light.

If the reader can manage his articulation, the image, the tone, and every thing elſe will correſpond. Here, again, we have freſh reaſon to complain of our great epic poet,

poet*, ſince the five lines he hath employed on this ſubject contain a great many polyſyllables, each demanding a ſlow, ſluggiſh, reluctant delivery—The ſublimeſt thought may be deſtroyed by uſing improper ſymbols to expreſs it; ſince every word ſhould, according to a judicious critic §, reſemble the motion it ſignifies, a rough ſubject ſhould be imitated by harſh ſounding words; and words of many ſyllables, pronounced ſlow, or ſmooth, if grief or melancholy is to be excited.

To return. Indiſtinguiſhable darkneſs ſat brooding upon the face of the deep previous to the command—Let there be light—and there was light: the word was given, and the order obeyed, in the ſame inſtant. But what were the benevolent *conſequences* of this command? Why, no leſs than the creation of the world, and all the elegancies and conveniencies belonging to it;—the diviſion of ſeaſons, the eſtabliſhment of the planets, and a general accom-

 modation

* Milton. § The author of the Elements of Criticiſm.

modation for the ſervice of the favourite creature! In the remaining verſes of this chapter, the œconomy, wiſdom and bounty of Providence ſtand diſplayed and recorded in all the purity and ſimplicity of ſacred literature. Where is the barren fancy that doth not kindle as it goes? Where the heart that feels not the mercies which reſulted from the orders of the original parent? The celeſtial ſpirit no ſooner began to *move*, than all things were made: the day for delight, and the night for repoſe; the breath of the morning became embalmed, and the evening breezes bore healthful bleſſings upon her wings: the waters became obedient to their bounds, and the earth ſmiled with variegated verdure: animals of various natures, ſome adapted to the wood, and ſome to the wave; ſome exulting in their ſpeed, and others contented with their ſlowneſs; ſome truſting to the foot, and others mounting upon the wing ſported over creation. Then, nor till then, was *man*, the erect, the immortal, created.

created. The world being now fit for the reception of *ſuch an inhabitant*, he was introduced upon the ſcence as maſter of the mighty drama. In the ſimilitude of his maker, with the face of a cherub, and the form of a god, he was born for dominion. Authority ſat on his brow, his eye denoted his power, and the father put into his hand the ſceptre of command. The inferior creatures ſaw, acknowledged and obeyed. Then aroſe woman; the companion, the friend, the wife of his greatneſs: ſociety was founded upon the endearments of love and innocence, the lambs bleated forth their joy, the birds ſung amidſt the branches, man triumphed in his honours, and the Deity ſurveyed his undertaking, and ſaw that it was good.

How admirably theſe bleſſings are *deſcribed* may be eaſily ſeen by every one that reads the whole chapter firſt, and then Milton's paraphraſe of it: for the ſimplicity and unaffected dignity, which characteriſes the one, greatly ſurpaſſes, in general,

the laborious pomp, and amplified majeſty of the other. Let it be, at the ſame time, conſidered, that we are now comparing our immortal poet with the only book in the world, perhaps, to which it muſt yield the palm: and, to do the author juſtice, I ſhall not paſs over thoſe *happineſſes*, whether of genius or ſkill, which, here and there, ſeem to improve even upon Moſes: a firſt inſtance occurs immediately.

His *brooding* wings the *ſpirit* of God *outſpread*,——

In another place,

There wanted yet the maſterwork, a creature,
Endu'd
With ſanctity of reaſon, who might erect
His ſtature, and, upright, with front ſerene,
Govern the reſt, ſelf-knowing, and from thence,
Magnanimous to correſpond with heaven.

After all, I may, poſſibly, be cenſured by ſome, for conſidering the ſacred writings, in any degree, as compoſitions; ſince, it is evident, that the chief end of this venerable volume is, as Mr. Rollin obſerves, rather

rather to purify the heart, than captivate the imagination, or gratify lettered curiosity: yet the God who created human nature, knew, intimately, the method by which that nature was moſt forcibly attracted; he knew, conſequently, what mode of addreſs was beſt adapted, and would moſt readily be admitted into the boſom, and work its way into the ſoul. For this very reaſon, it is obvious, he directed a language likely to anſwer ſuch ends; and this accounts for the remarkable majeſty, ſimplicity, pathos, and energy, and indeed, all thoſe ſtrokes of eloquence which diſtinguiſh the Bible: whence, every vice may be reſtrained, every error corrected, and every virtue encouraged. *Religious eloquence*, and the rhetoric of the ſcriptures, are, in the higheſt degree, favourable to the cauſe of truth. Nor can they, ſurely, ever ſuffer, by any critical obſervations on the ſplendour, correctneſs, or purity of the diction. Fully perſuaded of this, I proceed with my ſketches.

I cannot, however, paſs by this part of ſcripture, without noticing its unornamented ſimplicity and importance. The firſt chapter of Geneſis may be conſidered as the exordium of the Bible. The ſacred penman, in a ſingle page, hath related a variety of events, circumſtances, and actions, which demand the moſt conſummate attention. To one ſcanty chapter is confined the work of the creation. Curioſity is captivated, and the ſoul impreſſed by every ſentence.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Here is the firſt aweful and admirable tranſaction, and yet compreſſed within the limits of ten words. The ſecond verſe mentions the chaotic ſtate of things, of themſelves, incongruous and incompetent, prior to the creation.

The third verſe, fills the human ſoul with as magnificent an image as it is capable of entertaining; and recites, indeed, ſo bright

bright a bleſſing, that we muſt ſeek relief from its effulgence in the feebleneſs of mortal underſtanding, that cannot bear the fuller diſplays of cæleſtial radiance.

The fourth verſe, recounts the Omnipotent's approbation at the ſurvey of his own performance: and another bleſſing, of equal magnitude—the *diviſion* of light and darkneſs.

The ſixth, gives name to theſe, and cloſes the benevolent buſineſs of the firſt day.

I take it for granted, every man hath both an ear, and a ſoul for ſuch paſſages.

Modern writers, ſenſible of the beauty of this admirable opening of the ſacred books, have viewed it as worthy their imitation, and, without any ſcruple, adopted it as a pattern: and yet, neither moderns, or ancients have equally the brevity, the ſimplicity, or the perſpicuity of Moſes. It is needleſs to run into the catalogue of inſtances:

inſtances: the general defect is ſufficiently obvious. The greateſt epic poets amongſt the *ancients*, Homer and Virgil, have been complimented on the conciſeneſs of *their* exordiums; but, neither the Iliad, or the Æneid, reach the *various* excellencies which are *compreſſed* without being *crouded*, in the firſt chapter of Geneſis. I ſubmit the compariſon to the critics, with all poſſible confidence of ſuperiority on the ſide of *ſcripture*. The paſſages, however, are too well remembered to make a tranſcript neceſſary.

I therefore conclude the ſubject, that the learned and judicious reader may turn to the originals.

ESSAY

ESSAY II.

ORIGIN of DRESS.

PASSAGE.

AND THEY WERE BOTH NAKED, THE MAN AND HIS WIFE, AND WERE NOT ASHAMED.

THE purity of Paradiſe is no where more ſweetly diſplayed than in this verſe: for unconſcious of guilty deſires, they were unconſcious of ſhame.

They were both naked, the man and his wife.

There is a modeſty in the very ſound of the words; even though they exhibit a nudity. *They were not aſhamed*, Luſt and Sin, the parents of diſguiſe, were not yet born: a ſtate of nature was then the ſtate of God.—

Man walk'd with God joint tenant of the ſhade.

How

How barren are the viſionary ſcenes of Arcadia, compared to that period! Whatever, indeed, has been conceived, or expreſſed in poetry, comes extremely ſhort of many paſſages and parts of the ſacred writings, merely conſidering them as literary compoſitions, but when we add to their excellencies as pieces of writing, the reflection of their being the ſacred credentials of religion, and the immortal volumes of ſalvation, how is our zeal and our admiration heightened! The ſentence before us, brings to view the lovely times of undebauched idea, when error and affectation had no dominion, and when the fantaſtic paſſion for external finery had no ſway, even in the breaſt of woman.

The captivating character of Eve, juſt at this criſis of ſacred hiſtory, as,

——On ſhe came
Led by her heavenly Maker, and adorn'd
With all that earth, or heaven could beſtow
To make her amiable

ſur-

ſurpaſſes any delineation of female grace and attraction, which hath been ſince attempted: to ſay the truth, our beautiful parent might well inſpire the genius of poetry, and ſhe might very properly be called the mother of the muſes; for the incomparable ſimplicity which embelliſhes her, even in the *deſcription* of her perſon, hath been copied by a thouſand bards. Shakeſpeare ſeems to have glanced towards her in his Miranda, who reflects the image and elegant innocency of Eve; and, yet, when Eve viewed her *own* figure in the lake, ſhe beheld a more delicate reſemblance of herſelf than through the mirror of Miranda. Milton hath here caught the hint, and touched it exquiſitely:

Two of far nobler ſhapes, erect and tall,
God-like erect! with native honour clad,
And *naked* majeſty, ſeem'd lords of all,
And worthy ſeem'd,
He for God only; ſhe, for God and him.
—She, as a veil, down to her ſlender waiſt
Her unadorn'd, golden treſſes wore
Diſhevel'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd.
So paſs'd they *naked* on, nor *ſhun'd* the ſight

Of God, or angel, for they thought no ill;
So, hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair
That ever since, in Love's embraces met.

Beyond dispute, the above verses find their original in the sentiment of Moses *.— The first interview of Miranda, with the first man she ever saw, reaches, not by any means, Eve's first introduction to Adam. We now consider Milton as a poetical commentator on the text of scripture: the beauty and sublimity of that, greatly assisting the sublimity and beauty of his own native genius. Let us then run the parallel of Miranda and Eve, somewhat critically together. There is fine *fancy* in the first, but the exquisitely-painted portrait of *truth* marks the last character. Upon viewing Ferdinand, for the first time, Miranda thus expresses the emotions of her surprise:

I might call him
A thing divine; for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.

This

* And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

This is, undoubtedly, ſweet and ſimple, but much inferior to the ſenſation and ſentiment of,

The faireſt of her daughters,

when *ſhe* firſt beheld her lover and her lord in a ſtate of innocence.

That day I oft remember, when from ſleep
I firſt awak'd, and found myſelf repos'd
Under a ſhade, on flowers, much wondering where
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
Not diſtant far from thence a murmuring ſound
Of waters iſſu'd from a cave, and ſpread
Into a liquid plain, then ſtood unmov'd
Pure as th' expanſe of Heav'n; I thither went
With unexperienc'd thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me ſeem'd another ſky.
As I bent down to look, juſt oppoſite
A ſhape within the watry gleam appear'd
Bending to look on me; I ſtarted back,
It ſtarted back, but pleas'd I ſoon return'd,
Pleas'd it return'd as ſoon with anſwering looks
Of ſympathy and love; there I had fix'd
Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain deſire,
Had not a voice thus warn'd me. What thou ſeeſt,
What there thou ſeeſt fair creature is thy ſelf,
With thee it came and goes; but follow me,

And

And I will bring thee where no ſhadow ſtays
Thy coming, and thy ſoft embraces, he
Whoſe image thou art, him thou ſhalt enjoy
Inſeparably thine, to him ſhall bear
Multitudes like thyſelf, and thence be call'd
Mother of Human Race: What could I do,
But follow ſtraight, inviſibly thus led?
Till I eſpy'd thee, fair indeed, and tall,
Under a plantain, yet methought leſs fair,
Leſs winning ſoft, leſs amiably mild,
Than that ſmooth watry image; back I return'd,
Thou following cryd'ſt aloud, Return fair Eve,
Whom fly'ſt thou? whom thou fly'ſt, of him thou art,
His fleſh, his bone; to give thee being I lent
Out of my ſide to thee, neareſt my heart
Subſtantial life, to have thee by my ſide
Henceforth an individual ſolace dear;
Part of my ſoul I ſeek thee, and thee claim
My other half: with that thy gentle hand
Seiz'd mine, I yielded, and from that time ſee
How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
And wiſdom, which alone is truly fair.

So ſpake our general mother, and with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreprov'd,
And meek ſurrender, half embracing lean'd
On our firſt father, half her ſwelling breaſt
Naked met his under the flowing gold
Of her looſe treſſes hid: he, in delight
Both of her beauty and ſubmiſſive charms,
Smil'd with ſuperior love, as Jupiter

On

On Juno ſmiles, when he impregns the clouds
That ſhed May flow'rs;———————

The gallantries of Miranda and Ferdinand, however beautiful, come not up to the courtſhip of our firſt parents in Paradiſe. For, in the ſubſequent paſſages, Ferdinand is too quaint, and Miranda, for ſo ſequeſtered a character, ſomewhat too forward:

FER. I am, in my condition,
A prince, Miranda; I do think, a king;
(I would, not ſo!) and would no more endure
This wooden ſlavery, than I would ſuffer
The fleſh-fly blow my mouth. Hear my ſoul ſpeak;
The very inſtant that I ſaw you, did
My heart fly to your ſervice, there reſides
To make my ſlave to it, and for your ſake,
Am I this patient log-man.
MIRA. Do you love me?
FER. O heav'n, O earth, bear witneſs to this ſound,
And crown what I profeſs with kind event,
If I ſpeak true; if hollowly, invert
What beſt is boded me, to miſchief! I,
Beyond all limit of what elſe i'th' world,
Do love, prize, honour you.
MIRA. I am a fool,

To

To weep at what I'm glad of.

FER. Wherefore weep you?

MIRA. At mine unworthineſs, that dare not offer,
What I deſire to give; and much leſs take,
What I ſhall die to want: but this is trifling;
And all the more it ſeeks to hide itſelf,
The bigger bulk it ſhews. Hence baſhful cunning!
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence.
I am your wife, if you will marry me:
If not, I'll die your maid: to be your fellow,
You may deny me; but I'll be your ſervant,
Whether you will or no.

FER. My miſtreſs, deareſt,
And I thus humble ever.

MIRA. My huſband, then?

FER. Ay, with a heart as willing,
As bondage e'er of freedom; here's my hand.

MIRA. And mine, with my heart in't; and now, farewel,
Till half an hour hence.

FER. A thouſand, thouſand.

The fourteen words of

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not *aſhamed*.

Imply more, and bring the meaning nearer to the heart. The bluſh of ſhame was

was not indeed, yet known; and the only roſes that painted the human face, were the roſes of health and beauty. The man and his wife, as yet, underſtood not that nakedneſs diſcovered ought indelicate, or myſterious.

Then was not guilty ſhame, diſhoneſt ſhame
Of Nature's works: honour diſhonourable!
Sin-bred! how have ye troubled all mankind
With ſhews indeed, mere ſhews, of *ſeeming* pure,
And baniſh'd from man's life, his happieſt life,
Simplicity, and ſpotleſs innocence!

Hence then, it is apparent, that the fig-leaf was not introduced until imagination became corrupt, and a train of vicious paſſions ſeized upon the heart. If ſuch the *origin of dreſs*, if ſuch the hiſtory of external decoration, how few reaſons have we to plume ourſelves upon our finery!

ESSAY III.

LONGEVITY.

PASSAGE.

AND ALL THE DAYS OF METHUSELAH WERE NINE HUNDRED SIXTY AND NINE YEARS.

TO what a ſpan is exiſtence reduced in the compariſon! Threeſcore and ten, with nine hundred and ſixty-nine! What a difference! Yet the ſcheme of ambition is vaſt, as ever; and, perhaps, it is for the beſt it ſhould be ſo. I fear, poſterity is more indebted to our pride than any better principle: we build houſes, lay out gardens, and purſue the moſt coſtly and laborious projects very frequently, when we have meaſured three fourths of our time, while the foot totters, and the hand ſhakes. Yet, let us make an honeſt, and candid confeſſion. Is all this toil and expence to

accommodate the new comers into life! Is it to render the paſſage delightful to our heirs; or, is it to gratify a paſſion for property; to furniſh age with a freſh plaything; or to ſhew the world how unwilling we are to leave it, by making preparations to enjoy it? Whatever be the motive, the end is well anſwered. Whatever the impetus which prompts to magnificence, and convenience; which bids us delight in extenſive improvements; whether it ſprings from our pride, or our pleaſure, it is juſt the ſame; poſterity is ultimately the better for it. Thus, life hath pleaſing attentions and amuſements to the laſt; the old are buſied in deſigns, which the young ſhall enjoy; the father ſows, the ſon reaps; and a general and healthful exerciſe, both of body and mind, preſerves us, equally from gloom, vacuity and ſtagnation.

ESSAY

ESSAY IV.

ORIGIN of SHIPPING.

PASSAGE.

AND GOD SAID UNTO NOAH, MAKE THEE AN ARK OF GOPHER-WOOD; ROOMS SHALT THOU MAKE IN THE ARK, AND SHALT PITCH IT WITHIN, AND WITHOUT, WITH PITCH.

THE moſt ingenious and uſeful arts are of celeſtial origin; and from this chapter, it is evident, that the firſt ſhip which ever floated on the world of waters, was built according to the plan, and under the regulating eye, of a divine artificer. With what amazing contrivance and œconomy were the directions given by the Deity to Noah! How exact the architecture, and what judicious hints were hence furniſhed to human creatures in regard to maritime affairs! Man has always been charactariſed by his powers of imitation.

From this very ark aroſe the firſt ideas of a poſſibility to paſs beyond the limits of land: the ſcheme once projected, and the ſecret of its conſtruction once imparted, it was not likely to be forgotten; ſo far otherwiſe, that we ſtand indebted to it, for many valuable bleſſings—for the advantages of commerce, the pleaſure of travel, and the glory of victory. The merchant and the ſailor owe to this undertaking all their benefits; and whatever deſirable circumſtances ariſe from connections with remote climates, certainly originate from an imitation of that ſacred repoſitory, which preſerved from the deluge the family of Noah.

ESSAY

ESSAY V.

THE DOVE.

PASSAGE.

HE SENT FORTH A DOVE FROM HIM, TO SEE IF THE WATERS WERE ABATED FROM OFF THE FACE OF THE GROUND.

BUT THE DOVE FOUND NO REST FOR THE SOLE OF HER FOOT, AND SHE RETURNED UNTO HIM INTO THE ARK; FOR THE WATERS WERE ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH. THEN HE PUT FORTH HIS HAND, AND TOOK HER, AND PULLED HER IN UNTO HIM INTO THE ARK.

AND HE STAYED YET OTHER SEVEN DAYS, AND AGAIN HE SENT FORTH THE DONE OUT OF THE ARK.

AND THE DOVE CAME IN TO HIM IN THE EVENING, AND LO, IN HER MOUTH WAS AN OLIVE LEAF PLUCKT OFF: SO NOAH KNEW THAT THE WATERS WERE ABATED.

AND HE STAYED YET OTHER SEVEN DAYS, AND SENT FORTH THE DOVE, WHICH RETURNED NOT AGAIN TO HIM ANY MORE.

THERE is a peculiar beauty, not only in the ſentiment and language of theſe verſes, but in the thing itſelf.

The tranſactions and friendly intercourſe of Noah and his dove have a tenderneſs and ceremony in them, truly delightful. The eye melts at the ſimplicity, and the heart warms at the ſentiment. Poetry, in her happieſt flight, could imagine nothing more ſo intereſting to the fancy.

Hail, gentleſt of birds!—Hail meſſenger of ſecurity! Through thy means was the dry ground diſcovered, and the gratitude of man ſhall not eaſily forget the fidelity of the dove *!

He ſent forth the dove to ſee if the waters were abated. What an important errand, for ſo ſmall an expreſs! Yet the induſtrious little wing flew over the watry univerſe, and employed every feather in the ſervice of man; after a vain excurſion

* How often is ſhe invoked by the poets? One inſtance out of many——

——Pity is due to the *dove*,
For it ever attendeth the bold,
And they call it the *ſiſter of love*.

ſhe

ſhe returned; for the waters were ſtill without a ſhore. Methinks I ſee the patriarch ſtand upon the deck, to wait the return of his meſſenger, and as ſoon as ſhe reſts her fatigued foot upon the ark, he tenderly puts forth his hand and pulls her to him: thus rewarded for her labours, after ſeven days repoſe, her aſſiſtance being again ſummoned, ſhe truſts to her pinion; and lo, in the evening, ſhe came. By mention of the evening, it ſhould appear, that ſhe was diſpatched in the morning, or, at leaſt, very early in the day. What a taſk of toil muſt it then have been! how many billowy leagues muſt ſhe have travelled ere ſhe found that, of which ſhe was in ſearch! Linger upon the land I can never believe ſhe did, however the verdure and vegetable novelty might charm her. No! it was not until the evening ſhe ſucceeded in her endeavours, and then, upon the wings of kindneſs, ſhe haſted to ſatisfy the impatience of her maſter. Upon her ſecond return, behold, a leaf was in her mouth! What a ſweet way is here of communicating

the happy tidings. But, indeed, every ſyllable of this matter hath a grace and a conſequence peculiar to it: it was an *olive* leaf which ſhe bore, the leaf of amity, the emblem of peace; as much as to ſay, Lo, maſter, the waters are abated, and I have plucked a leaf as a teſtimony of my truth: the Power who commandeth the waves to dry up and diſappear, hath ordained me to bear to thee this olive-branch; haply it is the pledge of promiſe and conciliation betwixt him and thee, and thou ſhalt not only ſet thy foot ſafely upon land, but there proſper, and enjoy the pardon of thy God.

And after ſeven days more, he ſent her forth again, and ſhe returned no more. One is divided here betwixt ſmiles and tears: it is an exquiſite paſſage. The land and earth had, by this time, reſumed their accuſtomed beauties; the trees diſplayed a greener glory, the flowers ſprung brighter from the wave, and the dove having performed her duty, enjoyed, as nature directed, the beauties of renovated verdure.

Yet

Yet ſhe returned no more. Noah, though he knew the cauſe of her delay, had loſt his favourite bird. Alas! it was a draw-back upon the felicity of the new-appearing world. Fie upon the heart that has not a feeling upon ſuch occaſions. The ſoftneſs of the dove, however, is ſtill had among the children of men, in grateful remembrance. She is equally celebrated in prophane and ſacred hiſtory, and every epithet of endearment is allotted to her. She is conſidered as favourable to love, and propitious to every tender undertaking; nor can we, at any time, expreſs a courteous character without giving to it, among other qualities, the gentleneſs and truth of THE DOVE.

ESSAY VI.

THE SEASONS.

PASSAGE.

WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH, SEED-TIME AND HARVEST, AND COLD AND HEAT, AND SUMMER AND WINTER, AND DAY AND NIGHT, SHALL NOT CEASE.

AMONG the great bleſſings and wonders of the creation, may be claſſed, the regularities of times and ſeaſons. Immediately after the flood, the ſacred promiſe was made to man, that ſeed-time and harveſt, cold and heat, ſummer and winter, day and night ſhould continue to the very end of all things: accordingly, in obedience to that promiſe, the rotation is conſtantly preſenting us with ſome uſeful and agreeable alteration; and all the pleaſing novelty of life ariſes from theſe natural changes; nor are we leſs indebted to them

for all its ſolid comforts. It has been frequently the taſk of the moraliſt and poet, to mark, in poliſhed periods, the particular charms and conveniencies of every change; and, indeed, ſuch diſcriminate obſervation upon natural variety cannot be undelightful; ſince the bleſſing, which every month brings along with it, is a freſh inſtance of the wiſdom and bounty of that Providence which regulates the glories of the year. We glow as we contemplate, we adore, whilſt we enjoy. In the time of ſeed-ſowing, it is the ſeaſon of *confidence*; the grain which the huſbandman truſts to the boſom of the earth ſhall, haply, yield its ſeven-fold rewards: ſpring preſents us with a ſcene of lively *expectation*; that which was before ſown begins now to diſcover ſigns of ſucceſsful vegetation: the labourer obſerves the change, and anticipates the harveſt: he watches the progreſs of nature, and ſmiles at her influence; while the man of contemplation walks forth with the evening, amidſt the fragrance of flowers, and promiſes of plenty, nor returns to his cottage

cottage till darkneſs, cloſes the ſcene upon his eye. Then cometh the harveſt, when the large wiſh is ſatisfied, and the granaries of nature are loaded with the means of life, even to a luxury of abundance: The powers of language are unequal to the deſcription of this joyous ſeaſon: it is the carnival of nature: ſun and ſhade, coolneſs and quietude, mirth and muſic, love and labour, unite to render every ſcene of ſummer enchanting. And the diviſion of light and darkneſs is one of the kindeſt efforts of omnipotent ſagacity. Day and night yield us contrary bleſſings, and, at the ſame time aſſiſt each other, by giving freſh luſtre to the delights of both. Amidſt the glare of day and buſtle of life, how ſhall we ſleep? amidſt the gloom of darkneſs, how ſhall we labour?

How wiſe, how benignant, how like a Deity then, is the proper diviſion! The hours of light are adapted to activity, and thoſe of darkneſs to reſt. 'Ere the day is paſſed, exerciſe and nature prepare us for the

the pillow; and by the time that the morning returns, we are again able to meet it with a ſmile. Thus, every ſeaſon hath a charm, peculiar to itſelf, and every moment affords ſome intereſting innovation.

ESSAY

ESSAY VII.

SUPREMACY of MAN.

PASSAGE.

AND GOD SAID TO NOAH, THE FEAR OF YOU, AND THE DREAD OF YOU, SHALL BE UPON EVERY BEAST OF THE EARTH, AND UPON EVERY FOWL OF THE AIR; UPON ALL THAT MOVETH UPON THE EARTH, AND UPON ALL THE FISHES OF THE SEA: INTO YOUR HAND ARE THEY DELIVERED.

WHAT a privilege hath man! What ſuperiority what dominion! Yet he who thought proper to deliver all the creatures, (whether winged or footed) which creep beneath the graſs, or ſoar into the air, into the hand of man, aſſuredly deſigned to ſecure to them, a friend, in the maſter, and a protector, in the ſovereign. I give them all to thy care, ſays the Deity; they are thine, for pleaſure and for food; but create not, I conjure thee, create not, unneceſſary miſery: from the unwieldy

unwieldy elephant even to the emmet, haſt thou authority; yet, uſe it like a man. To every atom is allowed a certain portion of ſenſation, and every atom is born to a certain degree of enjoyment: deprive it not of this, but rather courteouſly *promote* the gratification, than *prevent* it. I, the almighty Parent, have beſtowed the inferior creatures upon thee, my favourite work: for what *reaſons* thou art thus diſtinguiſhed in the ſcale, is a ſecret not to be examined: flattering enough it is, that thou *art* diſtinguiſhed. But though all things are in ſubjection, nothing was born to ſlavery. Scorn to be the tyrant, and the very fowls of the air ſhall peck from thy hand: only *deſerve* thy eminence, and *enjoy* it. Such, doubtleſs, is the meaning of this verſe; but the general practice ſeems as if it were underſtood literally: for the *fear and dread* of the animal world is now, *indeed*, upon every beaſt of the earth; and the tyranny of man is too frequently exerted upon all that moveth. The fear and dread, here ſpoken of, is rather the reverence and obe-

dience

dience which the *beſtial* ſhall pay to the *human* nature, than that terrifying ſenſation which ſhall drive the brute from the preſence of man. There is ſomething inhoſpitable in thus exerting an undue ſeverity over the creatures of our convenience: they are fatted, indeed, to fall for our ſubſiſtance: they toil, refreſh themſelves a while, and toil again; or elſe they ſlumber and feed beneath our eye, and, as it were, plead eloquently, each in his own language, for *our guardianſhip*. When we lead them to the laſt agony, ah! let it not be in triumph; nor, as one life is ſacrificed for another, as the blood of the animal is ſhed for the ſupport of the man, let us not, in the mean time, render the little allotment of their exiſtence more painful, by withholding from them that ſympathy, to which whatever is delivered to our hands, has a right to claim from our hearts.

ESSAY VII.

STORY of ABRAHAM and LOT.

PASSAGE.

AND THERE WAS A STRIFE BETWEEN ABRAHAM'S HERDMEN AND LOT'S HERDMEN.

DOMESTIC altercations began to perplex families in the very childhood of time; the blood of a brother was ſhed, even before the affinity became known. But with how much tenderneſs and good ſenſe doth Abraham here prevent the diſagreement which had well nigh ariſen, as is but too commonly the caſe, from the quarrel of two ſervants. The heart is eaſily affected by circumſtances in private life, and the conduct of Abraham is, in many points, ſo admirable, that the tranſactions of this ſingle patriarch are of ſufficient conſequence to furniſh a very voluminous,

minous, as well as a very captivating commentary. He ſaid unto Lot, I pray thee let there be no ſtrife betwixt me and thee, nor between my herdmen and thine. Why? For the tendereſt reaſon in the world: becauſe, we are brethren. The very image of the patriarch in the attitude of entreaty, the fraternal tear juſt ſtarting from his eye, is this moment before me: and thus, methinks, I catch inſtruction (as he addreſſes Lot) from the lip of the venerable man. Away, my dear brother, away with ſtrife; we were born to be the ſervants of God, and the companions of each other: the twin breaſts of our mother are not ſo cloſely united as thou and I: as we ſprang from the ſame parent, ſo we naturally partake the ſame affections. We are brethren, ſons of the ſame father: we are friends, for ſurely kindredſhip ſhould be the moſt exalted friendſhip: let not *us* then diſagree, becauſe our *herdmen* have diſagreed, ſince that were to encourage every idle pique, and ſenſeleſs animoſity. Great, indeed, hath been our ſucceſs ſince our

our migration into this fair country: we have much ſubſtance, and much cattle. But what of that? Shall brothers quarrel, becauſe it has pleaſed Heaven to proſper them—Oh ingrateful! Oh impious!—But if, notwithſtanding theſe perſuaſives, thy ſpirit is ſtill troubled, let us *ſeparate*: rather than *contend* with a brother—hard as it is, I could even *part* with him for a time—haply, the occaſion of diſpute (which *I* have already forgotten) ſhall ſoon be no more remembered by *thee*. Is not the whole land before thee? Take then my bleſſing and my embrace, and ſeparate thyſelf from me: To thee is ſubmitted the advantages of choice: if thou wilt take the left hand, then, that I may not appear to thwart thee unbrotherly, I will take the right: or if thou art more inclined to the country which lieth upon the right, then will I go to the left. Be it as thou wilt, and *whitherſoever* thou goeſt, *happy* mayeſt thou be.

Lot, liſtened to his brother, and departed. He caſt his eyes on the well-watered

watered plains of Jordan. There ſeems a degree of avaricious inſenſibility in his character; and when he ſeparated, it appears to have been with the hope of increaſing his wealth; while Abraham, no doubt, often preſſed his brother's hand, and often bade him adieu, and even *followed* him to repeat the farewell wiſhes, ere he could ſuffer him to depart.

ESSAY

ESSAY IX.

MERCY.

PASSAGE.

AND ABRAHAM SAID, WILT THOU ALSO DESTROY THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED, O LORD?

PERADVENTURE, THERE BE FIFTY RIGHTEOUS WITHIN THE CITY; WILT THOU ALSO DESTROY AND NOT SPARE THE CITY, FOR THE FIFTY RIGHTEOUS THAT ARE THEREIN? &c.

THESE, and the following verſes, in a very remarkable manner, demonſtrate, on the one hand, the MERCY of the Almighty; and the benevolent diſpoſition of this amiable patriarch, on the other. We are firſt ſtruck with the tender arguments of Abraham, and then with the yielding kindneſs of the long-ſuffering Omnipotent. Wilt thou not ſpare the place, O Father, ſays the petitioner, for the ſake of fifty upright characters? Far be

be it from charity and from benevolence, like thine, to do after this unequal manner; far be it from thee to blend the fates of the virtuous with thoſe of the wicked: far be it from the univerſal judge, who weigheth all things in the even balance, to do amiſs, or to deal unfairly! The anſwers of the Deity are uncommonly affectionate, and conſiſtent with the goodneſs of the Godhead. If I find (ſaid he) fifty righteous within the city, then I will ſpare *all* the place for *their* ſakes. But alas! Abraham, who knew the wickedneſs of Sodom, as well as the mercy of the power whom he addreſſed, was obliged to go farther. Behold, now, I have taken upon me, poor imperfect creature as I am, a compound of duſt and aſhes, to ſpeak before the Lord of nature; I tremble in thy preſence, and yet I approach thee. Peradventure there ſhall lack five of the fifty righteous: thou wilt not be *extremely* minute to mark what is wanting; nor can it be in thy benignant nature to deſtroy all the city for lack only of five!

To

To this the reply was agreeable to the wiſhes of the patriarch; for the Deity declared he *would* ſpare the city for the ſake of forty and five. And thus the matter went on, requeſting on the one hand, and granting on the other, till the Lord of forgiveneſs promiſed to ſuſpend the ſtroke of deſtruction for the ſake of ten. Perhaps the forbearance of Heaven to the children of men, was never more finely illuſtrated than in this inſtance: and when we conſider it, we ſhall the leſs wonder at the little interruptions and ſtops that are put to the general impiety of the times. It is the grand complaint of moraliſts, that we live in an age far exceeding every other in point of degeneracy; that the world is much worſe than it was in the days of old; and that, conſequently, it is matter of aſtoniſhment the Creator doth not, for theſe reaſons, deſtroy what he hath made, and hurry on in wrath, the diſſolution of all things. But the hiſtory of mankind evinces, that in the earlieſt periods, the vices and paſſions as generally prevailed as at preſent; that mur-

der, envy, drunkenneſs, and every other error, as powerfully tyranized over the human heart, as at this very hour: though, perhaps, the moderns may have made ſome *innovations* in iniquity, it is but doing the ſame bad things with more art, with more faſhion, or with more refinement.

Infinite, indeed, muſt be the mercy, which, both at the beginning and now, preſerves us from the vengeance of Heaven; and the crimes of *every age* have been of ſufficient magnitude to provoke the puniſhment, and to exerciſe the utmoſt kindneſs of the Deity! What, for inſtance, muſt be the ſenſations of eternal perfection, at the ſight of all that variety of crime perpetrated in a ſingle day, within the precincts of every large city? What muſt he, who comprehends at one view all the tranſactions of the world, feel, as he ſurveys that aſtoniſhing maſs of miſchief, fraud, malignity, blaſphemy, and meanneſs, committed conſtantly beneath his penetrating eye? Mercy, is certainly his diſtinguiſhed attribute.

Amongſt

Amongſt men, we call *him* a forgiving character, who paſſes over, with impunity, ſome petty affront, or injury, in ſocial life: the parent is eſteemed amiable, who pardons an offending child; and to reſiſt giving blow for blow, when the temptation to recriminate lies *fairly open*, is thought to be the ſublimeſt effort of human excellence. But if all things derive conſequence from compariſon, how do theſe venial virtues dwindle when we place them near thoſe of the Omnipotent? Notwithſtanding the thouſand inſults that are daily directed by man againſt his maker, how very, very ſeldom his red right arm is raiſed to deſtroy: and even when impiety, with the ſtrides of a giant, towers onward to the throne, with what ſuperior mildneſs of majeſty he cloſes his eye upon the audacity, as unwilling to ſee what his juſtice muſt have puniſhed. Amidſt his greatneſs, he ſits enſhrined, continuing to diſpenſe a bleſſing where a curſe is frequently deſerved; and in the very moment that man is murmuring at his regulations, with how much kindneſs does he

perſiſt in beſtowing his bounty, till even the complainer is ſilenced and aſhamed. Well then, indeed, may we exclaim with a univerſal voice of ſincerity, "Bleſſed be "the name of the Lord, for his MERCY * "endureth for ever."

* In treating of the ſubject of *mercy*, and the ſublime and beautiful of ſentiment, it were a kind of literary hereſy to omit two moſt eloquent and divine paſſages, the one from the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew, and the other from Shakeſpear's Merchant of Venice. They are both, beyond meaſure, pathetic; and, indeed, one is divided whether moſt to admire the tenderneſs of our Saviour, or the argument of Portia. The paſſions are, either way, ſtrongly affected, and as the pathetic is, indiſputably, a gentle ſtream flowing from a ſublime ſource, we may certainly rank what follows amongſt the happieſt ſtrokes of the ſublime and beautiful.

"O Jeruſalem! Jeruſalem! thou that killeſt the pro-"phets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, how "often would I have gathered thy children together, even "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye "would not?"

The quality of *mercy* is not ſtrain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heav'n
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bleſſed;
It bleſſeth him that gives, and him that takes,
'Tis mightieſt in the mightieſt: it becomes

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The throned monarch better than his crown:
For *mercy* is above all ſcepter'd ſway;
It is enthron'd in the heart of kings;
It is an attribute to God himſelf;
And earthly power doth then ſhew likeſt heav'n's
When *mercy* ſeaſons juſtice.

ESSAY X.

STORY of ABRAHAM and ISAAC.

PASSAGE.

AND IT CAME TO PASS AFTER THESE THINGS THAT GOD DID TEMPT ABRAHAM.

THIS ſtory of Abraham and his ſon Iſaac, is one of the many narratives in ſacred writ, which has employed the pens of our ableſt divines, being univerſally allowed, one of the maſter ſtrokes of the Bible. The commentators have alſo been remarkably diffuſe upon it; and yet it ſtill remains an inexhauſted ſubject. Indeed, there is not a ſentence in the whole chapter without its peculiar beauty; and, I am tempted to treſpaſs ſomewhat upon the limits I have allowed myſelf in theſe remarks, to enter into its various elegancies, minutely.

"And it came to paſs, that God did "tempt Abraham, and ſaid unto him, "Abraham! take now thy ſon, thine *only* "ſon, whom thou *loveſt*, and get thee into "the land of Moria; and offer him there "for a burnt offering, upon one of the "mountains which I will tell thee of." Whoever examines this command, critically, will find it conſiſt of every thing terrible to the heart of a parent; and that, to obey it, required the utmoſt *fortitude* of obedience. The good man is directed to take his child and murder him for ſacrifice; but it was to receive every poſſible aggravation: he was not the father of *many* children: he was not to ſacrifice the random offspring of his handmaid, Hagar; but, he was to take Iſaac, the dear child who came, after the years of expectation; the infant of angelic promiſe—his only legitimate ſon, and the darling of his heart. Sarah, no doubt, alſo doated with much fondneſs upon the lad; ſhe could not but be proud of this treaſure of her age; and, indeed, we find her in the preceding chapter,

ter, indulging her maternal tranſport, and thus, in the warmeſt language of ſelf-congratulation, confeſſing at the ſame time, her pride and pleaſure. Who would have ſaid unto Abraham that *Sarah* ſhould have given ſuch to children? Who could have thought ſhe would have preſented him with a ſon in his old age? Yet this child, this very ſon, was now marked out by Heaven as a victim, and his father was privately, by the ſame celeſtial appointment, to be his executioner: hard taſk! But to go on:

"And Abraham roſe up early in the "morning and ſaddled his aſs, and took "two of his young men with him, and Iſaac "his ſon; and clave the wood for the burnt-"offering, and roſe up, and went unto the "place of which God had told him."

"And he took the wood and laid it "upon Iſaac his ſon, and he took the fire "in his hand, and a knife, and they went "both of them together."

The ſoul of the midnight murderer might quake to read theſe paſſages of preparation: we feel equally for the ignorance of the youth, and the conſciouſneſs of his father. How muſt the parental boſom of Abraham throb as he ſaw the wood, which was to burn his child, borne upon his ſhoulder? how muſt the knife tremble in his hand? But the next verſe carries theſe images of horror ſtill higher; for the lad, in the innocent ſimplicity of his heart, ſaid to his father, "Behold the fire and the "wood, but where is the lamb?" What a natural queſtion on his part, but how agonizing to the father! How little did the child imagine he was himſelf the lamb, and that he had aſſiſted to erect a pile for his own deſtruction? But obſerve with what firmneſs the patriarch proceeds in deſpite of all the pleadings of nature. Having built the altar he laid the wood in order, and bound his ſon and laid him upon the wood. What a ceremony is here! Is there a heart inſenſible to ſuch deſcription? The very apparatus of the act, gives it additional

nal diſtreſs. But, ſee, the father ſtretches forth his hand, and brandiſhes the knife. In that moment the angel of the Lord calling him out of Heaven, ſtays his arm! What divine imagery is here! What a picture for the pen, or pencil! I behold the ſcene tranſacting before me: the child is faſtened to the wood, and directing his aſtoniſhed and ſtreaming eye to the parent, as if he would ſay, Oh, my father, what offence have I unwittingly committed, and wherefore, ah wherefore, wilt thou kill me?—The parent himſelf ſtands over his babe in utterable agony, yet reſolved to conquer the rebellious feelings of his frame; the tear of nature falls faſt upon his cheek—he turns aſide his face, unable to ſee him bleed—the ſtroke is coming, the poiſed arm is deſcending, and, lo, the angel, the ſaving angel, interpoſes for the preſervation of the child. What harmonious accents flow from his lips—"Abraham, Abraham, "lay not thy hand upon the lad; neither "do thou any thing unto him." The voice of a God only was fit to convey ſuch

intelligence. With what extacy muſt it have been received; and how muſt Abraham have haſted to unbind his darling? Here the tender heart might indulge itſelf in many pathetic and pleaſing ideas: it might repreſent the father and ſon embracing, rejoicing in the eſcape, and bowing in gratitude to the benevolence which occaſioned it: and, laſtly, as ſoon as the ſacrifice of the Heaven-provided ram was over, it may exhibit the patriarch preparing to depart, and thus addreſſing his ſon: Now then, my child, my dear Iſaac, now let us ſeek thy mother; haply ſhe forbodes ſome miſchief befalling thee; let us then haſte to compoſe her. Believe me, Iſaac, my heart ſilently bled for the danger which ſo late impended, and I could have died myſelf to ſave thee; but the will of Heaven muſt always be obeyed: I now perceive it was a trial, and I exult in having done my duty, without deſtroying my ſon: but haſte, Iſaac—thy mother will think that we tarry.

ESSAY

ESSAY XI.

DEATH of ABRAHAM.

PASSAGE.

THEN ABRAHAM GAVE UP THE GHOST; AND DIED IN A GOOD OLD AGE, AN OLD MAN AND FULL OF YEARS, AND WAS GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE.

THERE is a moſt beautiful iteration in theſe words, which give us the ſenſe they are intended to exhibit, with aſtoniſhing propriety. The venerable patriarch is, as it were, placed before us in his coffin, with the ſmile of ſatisfaction ſettled upon his features. He died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years. We have here one of the few inſtances wherein tautology is delightful, eſpecially where the ſameneſs of the ſenſe is relieved by variety in the expreſſion: but even the ſenſe itſelf is extremely copious and full.

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He died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years: i. e, as if the writer had ſaid, after having paſſed an hundred and threeſcore and fifteen years in a ſtate of virtue and obedience; in the whole courſe of which, conſcience could find nothing to reproach him, but the memory delighted to contemplate the purity of the paſt, then perceiving the gentle approaches of diſſolution, he laid himſelf down on the bed of reſignation, and equally calm and contented, departed from this world to the next, as in the ſerenity of ſlumber. None of thoſe frightful appearances, or dolorous ſounds were, we may ſuppoſe, near his pillow, which, even in death, was ſmoothed by piety, and the gloomy apartment illumed by the chearful radiance of reflection. The laſt hour, in ſuch caſes, loſes its horror: no greedy heir was watching and *wiſhing* the flight of his ſoul; no intereſted relations were computing the time when Fate would afford the opportunity to plunder and to pillage. Haply, Iſaac only was preſent, and the tears which *he* ſhed were

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the irreſiſtible drops of nature, flowing from the filial heart : the reſt was all compoſure ; for he died in peace, and was gathered to his people ; which, by the bye, is an exquiſite phraſe, ſignifying, he was buried with his anceſtors (at leaſt with her to whom, when living he was united) in the field of Ephron. There is, indeed, much beauty in the chapter wherein the particular circumſtances attending the purchaſe of this field is related, and we cannot too much admire the conſiderate ſenſe of Abraham, or his conjugal tenderneſs, in providing a proper place for the remains of his wife ; nor is the exactneſs, with which the whole matter is told as a point both of buſineſs and humanity, leſs worthy our obſervation.

ESSAY XII.

STORY of JACOB and RACHEL.

PASSAGE.

AND JACOB SERVED SEVEN YEARS FOR RACHEL, AND THEY SEEMED UNTO HIM BUT A FEW DAYS, FOR THE LOVE HE HAD TO HER.

THE ſweeteſt ſimplicity that can be conceived in compoſition, diſtinguiſhes, in general, the tender NARRATIVES of the Bible, from the love tales of modern writers; nor does any author approach, in any degree, near them in this reſpect, except ſome parts in the works of the immortal Shakeſpear; and one would think, in ſome places where he treated of the tender attachment of the ſexes, that he had an eye to the unaffected beauties of the ſcripture. The hiſtory of Rebekah and Rachel are both related, in a language, and in a

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manner beyond deſcription, fine and natural: every ſyllable has its charm, and the whole, is a feaſt for the fancy and the heart. Let us ſelect a few paſſages from each ſtory; and firſt from that of Rebekah.

"And it came to paſs, before he had "done ſpeaking, that behold Rebekah "came out with her pitcher upon her "ſhoulder; and the damſel was very fair to "look upon, and a virgin; and ſhe went "down to the well and filled her pitcher, "and came up; and the ſervant of Abra-"ham ran to meet her, and ſaid, Let me, I "pray thee, drink a little water of thy "pitcher."

Could any incident be poſſibly introduced with more ſimplicity? or could any be more favourable to begin the converſation? As if the ſervant, on ſeeing her approach, had ſaid to himſelf, Before I enter upon a more important ſubject, before I touch upon the point in which my maſter and his ſon are ſo tenderly intereſted, I will

begin

begin to try her diſpoſition, by ſlighter circumſtances; and being a traveller, and a ſtranger, I will examine her hoſpitality: Let me, I pray thee, fair damſel, refreſh myſelf amidſt the fatigue of a long journey, by a cool draught of the water which thou haſt juſt drawn from the well. What can be more courteous than her anſwer, "Drink, "my lord!" There is an elegance in the *brevity* of this reply. An ordinary writer would have made her ſtand curteſying and complimenting for many an idle minute, with the pitcher in her hand, and at laſt made many excuſes that ſhe had no cup ready to preſent it more politely. Such is the abominable parade of literary refinement! But with equal frankneſs and prettineſs Rebekah only ſaid, "Drink, my "lord." And then inſtead of entering into prolix civilities, ſhe *haſted*, i. e. ſhe ſet down her pitcher as expeditiouſly as poſſible, and gave him drink: and when he had done, (but *not till then*) ſhe ſaid: Now will I draw water for thy camels alſo, till *they* have done drinking. The urbanity of a

court

court could not have exceeded this; nor could any character more ſweetly explain itſelf. Having had ſufficient evidence of her kind temper and gentle heart, the ſervant now ventured to enquire after her family: And whoſe fair daughter art thou, obliging damſel? tell me, I pray thee, for thy goodneſs has made me not a little ſolicitous about thee: is there room in thy father's houſe for us to lodge? Her anſwer to this does her freſh honour; for, perſiſting in her amiable humour, ſhe told him ſhe was the daughter of Bethuel, the ſon of Milcah, and that ſhe had both ſtraw and provender enough, and room to lodge in: and the damſel *ran* (how the ſpirit of the character is preſerved!) to tell thoſe of her mother's houſe the requeſt of the traveller, ſpeaking, no doubt, as favourably of him as ſhe could. Her intelligence ſoon brought forth her brother, who had been informed by his ſiſter that he was the ſervant of the celebrated Abraham: and the brother, whoſe name was Laban, invited him in with the moſt friendly cordiality,

diality, and preſſed him much to eat ſuch delicacies as were moſt ſpeedily provided. But the ſervant, willing to take advantage of ſo fair an opportunity, and improve the moment of benevolence, declared his reſolution to refuſe food till he had told his errand. This meſſage is delivered with the utmoſt perſpicuity, honeſty, and exactneſs. After he had finiſhed, he requeſted an immediate anſwer: And now, ſaid he, I beſeech thee, deal kindly and truly with my maſter. Then the brothers of the damſel anſwer in a remarkable, but very affectionate manner: The thing proceedeth from the Lord, we cannot anſwer thee bad or good; i. e. it appears to be a predetermined matter of the Deity: to refuſe thee, therefore, might ſeem preſumptuous; and yet, as brothers, having no authority over the affections of the maid, whoſe happineſs is dear to us, how ſhall we ſpeak abſolutely in thy maſter's favour? Perhaps, however, Abraham could not poſſibly have diſpatched a more truſty meſſenger; for, having received this ambiguous reply,

reply, by which nothing was determined, he tries, in the next place, a ſtroke of policy worthy to be recorded. As ſoon as he had bowed himſelf in grateful acknowledgement to Heaven, for *ſo much* good fortune, he very judiciouſly turns his efforts towards obtaining the conſent of the virgin: and he firſt begins his attack upon her vanity, from which, with all her courteſy, one cannot ſuppoſe her to have been totally exempt: he brought forth jewels of ſilver, and jewels of gold, and rayment, and gave them to Rebekah. The man diſcovered no ſmall knowledge of human nature (ever operating, in many caſes, alike) in this conduct; and ſtill more, when, deſirous to get all the family on his ſide, he gave *precious* things to the brother and mother. Surely an amour by proxy, was never better, or more ſkilfully carried on, from the beginning to the end. When he had made the preſents, he did not improperly preſs for a direct reward, nor, indeed, ſo much as mention the matter farther at that time; but leaving the damſel to meditate upon her

her ornaments, he ate and drank, and paſſed the night ſocially, and ſuſpended the delicate ſubject. Here was a ſagacity diſplayed, to the deſpair of our dealers in romance, who prepoſterouſly jumble together inconſiſtencies, and deviate eternally from prudence, and nature. In the morning, however, he deſired his anſwer. Whatever were the ſentiments of the fair virgin, the brother and mother relented, and deſiring her company a few days longer, they promiſed ſhe ſhould go. In this requeſt there is a ſurpriſing ſweetneſs: how the relation ſpeaks in it? At any rate, ſhe muſt abide with us a little while, at the leaſt ten days: we cannot part without ſome endearing preparations; it would break our hearts. I pray thee therefore allow thus much to our kindred feelings; and if thou findeſt the maid nothing reluctant, why, after that, ſhe ſhall go back with thee to thy maſter and his ſon. But poſſibly, the ſervant did not wiſh to truſt the thing ſo many days undecided; and he might underſtand enough of human fickleneſs to apprehend

ſtrange

ſtrange changes of mind in the courſe of that time. However this be, he ſtrongly urged an inſtant reply. The whole matter was drawing to a criſis. They called the damſel, and put to her the deciſive queſtion; and the reſult was, her conſent to the ſuit: in conſequence of which, ſhe ſet off with the man, attended by a favourite ſervant, (her nurſe) for the houſe of Abraham. In the mean time Iſaac was not indifferent to the event of the tranſaction; for, he went out in the field at even-tide, to *meditate*, as we are told, but, more probably, to meet his deſtined bride; and when he ſaw the camels were coming, he was, no doubt, much affected with the approaching interview.

There is great delicacy preſerved in the character of Rebekah, in the deſcription of this interview. As ſoon as ſhe ſaw her future lord, ſhe lighted off her camel; and when the ſervant informed her it was Iſaac, with a modeſty truly feminine, and beyond the mere force of cuſtom, ſhe covered herſelf

ſelf with a veil. When the ſervant communicated to Iſaac the whole of the circumſtances, he was charmed with her conduct; and the laſt verſe of this intereſting hiſtory repreſents the lover tenderly leading her into the tent of his mother; ſoon after which, he courted her heart, and ſhe became his wife, and was beloved. What a noble poem, or rather, what a poetical fact, is here exhibited in a ſingle leaf? Tenderneſs, ſweetneſs, and the moſt delicate aſſemblage of images are judiciouſly blended, without the leaſt appearance of affectation, or the ſmalleſt want of advantageous language.

Nor is the ſtory of the loves of Jacob and Rachel leſs enchantingly related. This young woman, as Jacob was journeying eaſtward, happened to paſs by him with her father's ſheep, which it was her allotted employment to tend; and when he knew the damſel to be Rachel, he wept; telling her that he was her father's brother, and the ſon of Rebekah: Laban, her father,

rejoiced at the tidings, and embracing his kinſman, invited him into his houſe. Jacob continued there as a viſitant a whole month, during which time he conceived a very tender regard for Rachel, who is repreſented to us as a very beautiful woman. "And Laban ſaid to Jacob, Becauſe thou "art my brother, ſhouldeſt thou therefore "ſerve me for nought? Tell me, what "ſhall thy wages be?" To this, Jacob, willing to ſhew his tenderneſs for Rachel, and his wiſh to deſerve her, replied, I will ſerve thee, my brother, ſeven years for thy younger daughter, for, I confeſs, ſhe hath made an impreſſion on my heart. Laban agreed to this; "And Jacob ſerved ſeven "years for Rachel; and they ſeemed unto "him but ſeven days, for the love he had "to her." Thus far the dealing was brotherly on both ſides: the remaining paſſages of the ſtory are coloured by deceit. At the expiration of the ſeventh year, Jacob demanded his wife; and Laban, with a ſhew of much honeſty, courteſy and contentment, prepared to celebrate the nuptials

tials of his daughter. Accordingly, the day was paſſed in all that innocent gaiety, which was very early a cuſtom on ſuch occaſions. Laban gathered together his people, even all the men of the place, and made a feaſt. But the ſtratagem which was put upon Jacob in the evening, conſidered literally, was equally baſe, unbrotherly and barbarous. Inſtead of the object of his affections, Laban deceiveth him with Leah. What a confuſing circumſtance did the beams of the morning diſcover? for, behold, "in the morning, it was "Leah." Notwithſtanding this deception, however, he was ſtill reſolved to perſiſt in his paſſion for the lovely Rachel, and at length obtained her.

It is unneceſſary to make farther comment on this text, than juſt to obſerve, that the paſſion of love, which is almoſt the *foundation* of *all* poetry, is more pleaſingly, and highly touched in ſeveral parts of the SCRIPTURES, than in all the paſtoral, dramatic, or amorous attempts ſince the ſcriptures were written.

ESSAY XIII.

Reconciliation of Jacob and Esau.

PASSAGE.

AND ESAU RAN TO MEET HIM, AND EMBRACED HIM, AND FELL ON HIS NECK AND KISSED HIM; AND THEY WEPT.

SCENES of reconciliation go as near to the heart as any in human nature; and the chapter, whence this text is taken, is, perhaps, as full of tender circumstances as any extant: It recites the kind interview between Jacob and Esau.

These two brothers were thrown into some disagreement by the artifice of Rebekah, their mother, who, being partial to her son Jacob, advised him, and put him in the way of deceiving his father, and robbing his brother of his birth-right: an error which, though certainly, on her part,

proceeding from injudicious fondneſs, muſt ever remain as a ſpot upon her character. And, at the time; it occaſioned very ſerious conſequences: for Eſau, as was very natural, hated Jacob, after the bleſſing of which he (Eſau) was defrauded, and he ſaid in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, and then I will ſlay my brother. To prevent the execution and ill effects of this menace, Rebekah, dreading the harm which might happen to her favourite child, adviſed him to retire till the fury of Eſau might turn away. He did ſo, and a long time being now paſt ſince the quarrel, he was returned into his own country, with his wives and his wealth, and his little ones, whom he loved. The remembrance, however, of the wrong which he had done his brother, touched him with additional ſincerity as he drew near to the land where the offence was committed. There is an honeſt ſenſibility about us, which makes the very trees ſeem ſilently to upbraid us as we paſs by the place where we have done an injury to a neighbour.

neighbour. When he saw Esau advancing, his heart fainted within him: for there is actually in guilt, that, which in the bravest tempers operates for a time, like downright cowardice. But how much was he mistaken, or rather, how little did his fear give him pause to consider the natural and potent affections of the human heart!

The absence of a friend soon buries our resentment, and revives the images of tenderness; and when the frantic moments are past—when the dear offender is gone far from us, how busy is imagination to consider *ourselves* as the aggressors: how anxious to recall the conversations of kindness, and the sentiments of endearment! Hence one may reasonable believe, that Jacob was scarce departed, before Esau relented, and sighed for his return: Oh Jacob, my brother, my brother, (perhaps he might say) why wert thou so eager to leave me? the reflecting hour would soon have visited me —nay, it is already come, and I again weep for thy society: the love which was

formed in the cradle, ſhould not be interruted by our tumultuous paſſions, and I have a heart, Jacob, that throbs to embrace thee: wherefore then, my dear brother, ah wherefore wenteſt thou away? Indeed, the ſentiments of Eſau, at their firſt meeting, juſtifies this ſuppoſition: for, when Eſau ſaw him, he ran to meet him, fell with inexpreſſible fondneſs upon his neck, and gave him the fraternal kiſs. He then enquired after his attendants, and paid a proper reſpect to his wives and his children; after which, both the brothers wept. Here is the ſubject of a noble ſcripture-piece: the whole moving treaſures of Jacob drawn up in order; the mothers with their children and attendants, with Jacob at their head, on the one hand; and Eſau, with four hundred in his train, on the other. They meet—a ſilent ſuſpence prevails this moment—the next locks the brothers in the embrace of each other. In the mean time, what muſt be the ſenſations of the ſpectators? the female tear could not ſurely be repreſſed, the attend-

dants

dants muſt have remained in delighted aſtoniſhment, and the infants themſelves muſt have held out their little hands in gratulation, and wept for joy. But there is another part of this meeting too intereſting to be neglected, and to which, therefore, I ſhall pay the attention of a comment. I allude to the generous deportment of Eſau, upon Jacob's offering, as they may be called, the preſents of reparation. What meaneſt thou, queſtions he, by all this drove? Theſe, replied Jacob, are to find grace in the ſight of my lord. What exceſſive beauty is there in this humility of expreſſion! The preſents were not given as adequate compenſations for former injuries, but they were offered with all poſſible delicacy of diffidence: they were to find grace, i. e. to have the honour of becoming acceptable in the ſight of my lord. There is alſo an elegance in Jacob's calling him his lord. He, whom we have wronged, has ſome claim to our veneration; and becomes, indeed, additionally reſpectable, from having been undeſervedly injured. But Eſau's refuſal of theſe pre-

ſents ſets his character in a very diſtinguiſhed and amiable light. I have enough, my brother; keep that thou haſt, to thyſelf. Jacob, however, was ſtill earneſt to have them received, and, in a language ſcarce reſiſtible, thus urged his requeſt: nay, I pray thee, my brother, if now I have found favour in thy ſight, if I am ſtill regarded and reckoned as a brother, I pray thee receive my preſent; receive it, if it be only as a token of our reconciliation; this day ſhould be diſtinguiſhed, ſince it has reſtored me to the embraces of Eſau: and, believe me, brother, to ſee thy face again, and to ſee it in ſmiles, is a tranſport for which I have no expreſſion: I rejoice in they preſence, as in the preſence of a god. As to poſſeſſions, I have as thou, more than ſufficient to the moderation of my wiſhes. Deal then courteouſly with me, and accept the trifling teſtimonies of my love. There is a moment beyond which denial is unkind, and it is even poſſible for that, which was this minute diſintereſtedneſs, to become rudeneſs in the next.

Had

Had Eſau remained any longer inflexible he might have juſtly been charged with cruelty : but he underſtood the preciſe point of delicacy much better, and finding his brother's heart in the requeſt, he obligingly yielded to his entreaties, and took the preſents. Immediately after, we find Eſau preſſing Jacob to purſue his journey, offering himſelf to lead the way : " Let us " now take our journey, and let us go, and " I will go before thee." Jacob's reply hereto is another inſtance of ſcriptural ſimplicity, and was at the ſame time, a teſtimony of the ſpeaker's humanity and domeſtic virtues : he ſaid, " My lord knoweth " that the children are tender, and the " flocks and herds with young, are with " me ; and if men ſhould over-drive them " one day, all the flock will die. Let my " lord, I pray thee, go before, and I will " paſs on ſoftly, as the cattle that goeth " before me, and the children are able " to endure." In the laſt place, Eſau was deſirous to leave ſome of his own people with his brother, to render him any aſſiſt-

ance that might be wanting on the way: but Jacob anſwered, "What needeth it? "Let me find grace in the ſight of my "lord:" i. e. What occaſion is there, Eſau, for giving thee ſuch trouble? If I am again happy in the ſociety and eſteem of my brother—What more can poſſibly be added unto me? Heaven, in its utmoſt profuſion of bounty, cannot more ſincerely bleſs me. Thus terminated the interview, to the general joy of the parties concerned at that time, and to the ſatisfaction of every man ſince, who reads the hiſtory.

The Bible indeed, for the moſt part, clears up the point as it goes along; and, without ſeeming to poſſeſs the leaſt art, almoſt every narrative is actually ſo conſtructed, as to exhibit what the critics require, and what, indeed, is ſaid to be eſſential to every compoſition—a beginning, a middle, and an end. What is ſtill more, the minuter laws of literature are ſeldom violated, eſpecially, in what may, not improperly, be termed the epiſodes of ſcripture; and

and while on the one hand, we reverence it, as a complete and perfect ſyſtem of morals, we are on the other, delighted, with a beautiful variety of antient record, and of admirable writing.

ESSAY XIV.

STORY of DINAH.

PASSAGE.

AND DINAH, THE DAUGHTER OF LEAH, WHICH SHE BARE UNTO JACOB, WENT OUT TO SEE THE DAUGHTERS OF THE LAND.

HOW ſoon after the loſs of primæval innocence, the paſſions, which were let looſe upon the world, tyrannized amongſt mankind! We have ſcarce got beyond the middle of the firſt book of the Bible, and there is hardly a violation in human nature which is not upon record. Preſently after the creation of man, the firſt and only woman then in the world, introduced the fault of *diſobedience*; to that, ſucceeded the horrid crime of *murder*, the murder of a brother. Then, as population increaſed, errors multiplied in proportion;

portion; and the almighty Father, ſeeing that the wickedneſs of man was great in the world, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, continually; and, moreover, that the whole earth was filled with violence, repented that he had made it, and at length deſtroyed it, and buried it in a univerſal grave of waters; preſerving only the family of one man, who was perfect in his generations. The deluge was ſcarce gone, before Error rapidly ſtrode over the new world, and the firſt material circumſtance left us in proof of it was the building of Babel: "And "they ſaid one to another, Let us make "brick, and build us a city, and a tower, "*whoſe top may reach unto Heaven.*" What an arrogant idea! And thus came upon us the uncontroulable monſter *Ambition*. In the next place we are informed of the battle of the kings, whence came *Rebellion*. In the hiſtory of Hagar and Sarah, we perceive the origin of *Jealouſy*. The deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah needs no comment. The wife of Lot is a monument

ment of obſtinate *Curioſity*. Jacob's obtaining the inheritance of his brother, is an early evidence of deceit. Eſau's menaces, are inſtances of *Revenge*. Laban's trick upon Jacob with reſpect to Leah, is one of the firſt inſtances of *broken Faith*; and the treatment of Dinah, is a remarkable circumſtance of *Laſciviouſneſs* and *Inhoſpitality*. This is, I think, the firſt rape upon record; and it is alſo one of the moſt pardonable; for the raviſher, who, by the bye, was a nobleman, (contrary to the modern maxim of men of intrigue), was deſirous to repair the injury he had done, by marriage, and entreated the hand of the damſel after poſſeſſion, with unabated ardour: nay, the young man carried this matter farther ſtill, for he ſaid to her relations, "Aſk me never ſo much dowry and "gift, and I will give according as ye ſhall "ſay unto me; but give me the damſel to "wife." He even adopted a part of their religion to obtain her; and as ſoon as they yielded their conſent, he ſtill continued his intentions of doing her all poſſible juſtice,

and

and did not defer the nuptials. By this fair dealing Shechem became more honourable than all the houſe of his father. After this, the bridegroom's father propoſed a plan of intercourſe, and intermarriage with the tribe of Jacob, and, in general, it was accepted. But ſome braver ſpirits amongſt the relations of Dinah, ſcandalized at the indignity which their family had ſuſtained, meditated revenge; and two of her brothers who poſſeſſed a nicer ſenſibility of honour (viz. Simon and Levi,) took each man his ſword, and came upon the city boldly, and ſlew both the raviſher and his father. When Jacob expoſtulated with the young men on this tranſaction, and even rebuked them for deſtroying the character he had in the hearts of the people of that country, they anſwered him with a dignity truly fraternal, and diſcovered at once a high ſenſe of inſult, and a becoming veneration for the great ſocial compact, by which men are united to each other: "Should he deal with our ſiſter, as with an "harlot?" A conciſe queſtion this, but comprehending

comprehending a full and noble meaning: Shall the ſon of the very man whom we have dealt well with, in the way of buſineſs, violate the law of hoſpitality, and ſtrike the firſt wound in the very vitals of our honour and happineſs? even in the reputation of our ſiſter? Can we, O father, be ſo loſt to the duties of a brother, as to ſee her polluted, and in her, all our family, without puniſhing the raviſher? Forbid it, Courage, forbid it, Virtue! Heavens, ſhall *our* ſiſter, the ſiſter of the ſons of *Jacob*; of Jacob, who hath contended with angelic natures, and *prevailed*—ſhall they baſely bear a ſtain and an ignomy like this, without redreſs? No, my father! the ſpirit, the paternal ſpirit, nay, the very inſpiration of the Deity is in us, and urged us to the ſlaughter—to the *ſacrifice*, we ſhould have ſaid; for lo! the victim lies bleeding before thee.

Such is the language of true intrepidity: "Should he deal with our ſiſter as with an "harlot?" Though I would not be thought

to

to recommend bloodſhed, yet I can ſcarce avoid propoſing the noble conduct of theſe young men as a pattern of imitation. He, who violates the chaſtity of a woman, is by ſo much the more infamous, and deſerving of death, than the man who plants a piſtol at the boſom, as a crime which is liable to the juſtice of the laws, is leſs ſafe, and leſs miſchievous, than that, which involves in the diſgrace of one, the diſgrace alſo of a numerous family, and for the moſt part, a wide and inſulted circle of connections. Yet where, except in the ſword of a parent, or a brother, where is a redreſs for this grievance? Raviſhment, indeed, is cognizable; but where is the legal puniſhment for the more frequent and more fatal effects of undermining *ſeduction?* of ruin in the form of love, and treachery bewitchingly arrayed in the ſhape of reciprocal tenderneſs? Where, but in the boſom of bravery, is the ſcourge for that accumulated injury, which alienates the kindeſt relatives; which entices the daughter from the houſe of her father, till, by degrees, ſhe becomes an inhabitant

habitant of a brothel, paſſes away the days of beauty and youth, amidſt diſeaſe and wretchedneſs, and at length dies, untimely, a nuiſance to the ſtreet? If then the laws of the land have no proviſion againſt the increaſe of this foreſt of all human violations, what is the natural ſuccedaneum? The arm of Vengeance! And yet, are we not forbidden to abſtain from blood, on any provocation? We are, and we *ſhould* be: A moment's reflection convinces us, that the inhibition is founded in the law of eternal rectitude. It is mans' to err, and to mend; be it God's, to puniſh and to pardon.

ESSAY XV.

LIFE and DEATH.

PASSAGE.

AND BELAH DIED, AND JABOB REIGNED IN HIS STEAD,
AND JABOB DIED, AND HUSHAM REIGNED IN HIS STEAD.
AND HUSHAM DIED, AND HADAD REIGNED IN HIS STEAD.

ONE may apply to theſe monarchs an expreſſion ſome where in the famous Spectators; ſince no farther mention is made of them, than that they were born on one day, and were buried on another.

"Belah died, and Jabob reigned in his "ſtead." What an aſtoniſhing contemplation is the riſe and fall of the children of men! How are we ſtruck in the hiſtory of the world, with empires that once flouriſhed, and nations, whoſe people are no more! One man drops the ſceptre, and another takes

takes it up. The father ſinks into his ſhroud, and his ſucceſſor enjoys his honours for a little while, and then reſigns them to a third, who, dying, leaves them to a fourth, and ſo on *ad infinitum**. Nothing but familiarity could remove the alarming certainty

* Among the many celebrated paſſages of the excellent Shakeſpear there is one upon *this* ſubject, not inferior either to the morality or eloquence of St. Paul, who was certainly the ſublimeſt as well as the moſt perſuaſive orator in the world, and who (as I ſhall endeavour to evince, in the *future* progreſs of theſe ſketches) ſtill remains ſuperior to all his ſucceſſors. The paſſage alluded to above, is freſh in every man's memory, and cannot, indeed, be too frequently recollected or repeated.

To morrow, and to morrow, and to morrow
Creeps in this pretty ſpace, from day to day,
To the laſt ſyllable of recorded time;
And all our yeſterdays have lighted *fools*
The way to duſky death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking ſhadow, a poor player
That ſtruts and frets his hour upon the ſtage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an ideot, full of ſound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Criticiſm might, perhaps, enter an objection againſt the propriety of the word *fools*, at the end of the fourth line. Our yeſterdays, do not only light *fools*, but the children of Wiſdom, the way to death.—We are told by the poet, that even "The paths of *glory* lead but to the grave."

of

of death from the ſoul: it ſtill, however, remains a ſtartling matter, and may well give the hint of preparation, when we reflect, that all the tens of thouſands which a century and a half ago, were buſtling upon the face of the earth—kings, potentates, princes, and beggars, are now buried in its bowels: and the point comes ſtill nearer to our own "buſineſs and boſoms," when we farther conſider, that all which *now* has exiſtence in every part of the habitable world, muſt be ſoon inevitably in the ſame ſituation. Such is the progreſs of diſſolving nature, and ſuch the conſtant *decreaſe* and *increaſe* of created matter. By theſe means alſo, in a ſhorter ſpace of time than the flight of one hundred and fifty years, the univerſe (with reſpect to its inhabitants) wears a new face, and reſembles the preceding age, only in ſuch inſtances, wherein general likeneſs of race, or ſimilitude of feature is tranſmitted, from one generation to another.

Oſſian (whoſe Poem, whether modern productions or not, certainly breathe, in ſome places, an almoſt ſcriptural ſublimity, and are not much unlike the ſcriptural *manner* of writing) has, with equal propriety and pathos, imagery and morality thus deſcanted on the brevity of life.

"Deſolate is the dwelling of Morina:
"ſilence in the houſe of her fathers. Raiſe
"the ſong of mourning over the ſtrangers.
"One day *we* muſt fall; and they have
"only fallen before us. Why doſt thou
"build the hall, ſon of the winged days!
"Thou lookeſt from thy towers to-day.
"Soon will the blaſt of the deſert come.
"The mighty will not return; nor Oſcar
"riſe in his ſtrength. The valiant muſt
"fall one day, and be no more known.
"Where are our fathers or warriors! the
"chiefs of the times of old? They are ſet
"like ſtars that have ſhone: we only hear
"the ſound of their praiſe: but they were
"renowned in their day, and the terror of
"their times."

This

This is fine painting, and without any part of that obſcurity, or affectation of parages, which now and then ſticks to Oſſian. The moral paſſages which cloſe the above deſcription, derive a peculiar merit from their peculiar conciſeneſs. Oſſian and the divine writers of the Scripture are eminently happy in their ſhort, complete ſentences, in which the ſenſe is always full, without overflowing.

ESSAY XVI.

STORY of JOSEPH.

PASSAGE.

HE MADE JOSEPH A COAT OF MANY COLOURS.

HERE is alſo another of thoſe ſacred narratives which is not only exquiſite in itſelf, but which has engagad the attention of many admirable pens: yet, ſurely, while the art of writing, and the powers of the underſtanding remain, ſuch a ſtory will always furniſh *new* illuſtrations; and every man may be able to diſcover in it, and diſplay freſh beauties to charm, and freſh elegancies to recommend. To add, however, any thing to this narrative would be unneceſſary, and to recite the whole of it from the Bible, inconſiſtent with the limits of my deſign: a few general obſerva-

tions

tions, therefore, will be ſufficient. The happieſt ſtrokes of ſimplicity diſtinguiſh the very beginning of the hiſtory before us. "Now Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all "his children." But mark the reaſon for ſuch partiality, "becauſe he was the ſon "of his old age." Though the firſt-born is heir to our fortunes, the laſt-born, is, generally, the darling of our contemplation and careſſes: to the aged parent they are particularly endearing. But what was the firſt effect of this endearment? Why, ſuch as was ſuitable to the child's age, and perfectly pleaſing to the notions of his youth—his father made him a coat of many colours. Ah, fatal finery! This little decoration created the envy of his brethren —"And when his brethren ſaw that their "father loved him more than the reſt, "they hated him, and could not ſpeak "peaceably unto him." How gradually the quarrel opens! When they firſt began to envy the poor lad, they did not, all at once, outrageouſly aſſault him; but the paſſion was left to grow, naturally; the

fire

fire was permitted to kindle from the firſt ſpark into a general flame. This is true nature. They could not ſpeak peaceably unto him; i. e. they began to caſt reflections, mixed ſarcaſms with their converſation, and ſilently ſneered at him. But how naturally do the *dreams* increaſe the fraternal diſcontent! nothing in the world could have exceeded this circumſtance in point of aggravation. It was, indeed, ſuch a ſtroke, as, at firſt, offended the parent, fond as he was: what effect then muſt it have had upon the brothers? That which before was little more than diſlike, was now abſolute averſion. They ſaid unto him, "Shalt thou, indeed, reign "over us, or ſhalt *thou* have dominion over "us? And they hated him yet *more* for "his *dreams*." Thus prepared for vengeance, they were ready to ſeize the firſt opportunity which might happen. His being ſent by his father as a meſſenger to his brethren to know how it fared with them and with their flocks, was, alas, but too favourable an occaſion for their latent purpoſes,

poſes, and tne manner in which they expreſs themſelves, as they behold him afar off, is, in every reſpect, conſiſtent with the workings of nature—Behold, ſaid they one to another, "Behold this *dreamer* "cometh." What a taunt was this, and how quickly did it prepare the ſociety for the ſentiments which immediately followed. —"Come now, therefore, and let us ſlay "him, and then we ſhall ſee what will be-"come of his dreams." The fineſſe of Reuben was an human artifice: "Shed no "blood, my brothers, but caſt him into "this pit which is in the wilderneſs." This advice diſcovered an equal ſhare of good ſenſe and affection. Had Reuben intemperately and flatly oppoſed the intentions of the party, it is probable he might not only have encreaſed the vengeance they meant to take of Joſeph, but have likewiſe drawn their anger upon himſelf. Seeming, therefore, to think the lad deſerving puniſhment, and only preſuming to propoſe an alteration of it, as to the mode, was propitious to his amiable deſign of deliver-

ing

ing him to his father. Judah's motion to ſell him to the travelling Iſhmaelites is, likewiſe, a fine incident: but the ſtratagem of killing the kid, and dipping the many-coloured coat in it's blood, and then ſhewing it to the poor old father, is a circumſtance levelled immediately at the heart, and cannot fail of wounding every reader of the leaſt ſenſibility. It were no undelightful taſk to go on with a commentary on the remaining parts of this ſtory, from the reſidence of the hero in the houſe of Potipher, to his death and burial in Egypt: but it is a part of ſcripture ſo *particularly* handled by men of the moſt celebrated abilities, that every paſſage has many times been the ſubject of learned remark. Upon the whole, however, it appears to be one of the moſt *beautiful* and intereſting narratives in the whole lettered world; nor will it, perhaps, be eaſy to match it, even as it now ſtands tranſlated, by any compoſition, in any language. As a chain of ſacred facts, recorded in the divine volume of the chriſtian religion, it affects us with awe

and veneration: as a relick of antiquity, it is dear and valuable to all poſterity; and, as a piece of writing, it poſſeſſes at one and the ſame time, and in the higheſt degree, every elegance of literature: in point of ſtyle, it is various and maſterly; the images are pathetic beyond the force of encomium *to do them juſtice*, and the morality and virtues inculcated, are obvious, important, and domeſtic. Were it poſſible to alter, without taking from its beautiful ſimplicity, what a noble ſubject is here for an epic poem! To alter the *genuine text*, indeed, advantageouſly, is not, I conceive, poſſible: but to make the ſtory the *groundwork* of a poetical fabric, what an exquiſite piece might the genius of Milton make of it! I am in doubt, whether ſuch a pen, ſo ſuited as it was to ſacred ſubjects, might not render a poem upon the Hiſtory of Joſeph equal, if not, in ſome reſpects, ſuperior, to the now unrivalled Paradiſe Loſt.

And yet it is with reluctance I drop the comment on this entertaining ſubject, till I have

I have a little attended the worthy Joſeph in his proſperity: his faithful dealing as a ſteward: his honeſty and integrity as a man truſted with very extenſive treaſures, inſomuch, that his maſter "knew not ought "which he had, ſave the bread which was "before him:" his generous ideas of honour and hoſpitality, in reſiſting the charms of his miſtreſs: his reception and forgiveneſs of his brethren; his attachment to the youthful Benjamin; and his kind and filial interviews with his father, are all of them ſcenes ſo highly finiſhed and captivating, in their kind, that, they create a ſort of pious enthuſiaſm as we read, and the heart can ſcarcely take leave of them without a ſigh.

ESSAY XVII.

DEATH of JACOB.

PASSAGE.

AND IT CAME TO PASS, AFTER THESE THINGS, THAT ONE TOLD JOSEPH: BEHOLD THY FATHER IS SICK; AND HE TOOK WITH HIM HIS TWO SONS, MANASSEH AND EPHRAIM.

AND ONE TOLD JACOB, AND SAID: BEHOLD, THY SON JOSEPH COMETH TO SEE THEE; AND ISRAEL STRENGTHENED HIMSELF, AND SAT UPON HIS BED.

WITH what affectionate zeal Joſeph haſtened to his father, upon hearing of his ſickneſs! There is beauty and nature in the behaviour of Jacob on this tender occaſion. As ſoon as he heard that his ſon was coming, he ſtrengthened himſelf, and ſat upon the bed. Notwithſtanding all the languors of decay, he exerted himſelf to perform the laſt paternal offices of love: the very idea of his Joſeph, ſo far

ſtrengthened

ſtrengthened him, that he *ſat upon the bed.* Of ſuch potency, to the very laſt, are the finer ſenſibilities of the human heart. But this interview was not more affecting, than important. How intereſting was the ancient ceremony of bleſſing! Indeed, the benediction of an expiring man is *always* deſirable; but when the dying is a father, and that father deſerves the name, with what an aweful idea it affects the ſoul! Behold the good old man, when he had given proper directions for his funeral, ſtretching forth his hallowed hand, to bleſs. And hear, in what language he begins: "God, before whom my fathers, "Abraham and Iſaac, did walk; the God "which fed me all my life long, unto this "day; the angel, which redeemed me from "all evil, bleſs the lads: Let *my* name be "named on them, and the names of my "fathers, Abraham and Iſaac, and let them "grow into a multitude in the midſt of "the earth." What a flow of eloquence and ſublimity is here; how glowing the ſentiments; how pathetic the occaſion! By this

this time his ſtrength was more exhauſted, and he haſtily adverted to *another* intereſting ſubject—"Behold, I die, Joſeph, but "I have given to *thee* one portion, above "thy brethren, which I took out the hand "of the Amorite, with my ſword and with "my bow." This manner of diſtinguiſhing Joſeph from the reſt of his brethren by a legacy, which was particularly dear to the teſtator, and which, indeed, was an inſtance of his early ſkill in manly exerciſes, ſtrongly ſpeaks his ſenſe of Joſeph's generous behaviour in the day of neceſſity, while the famine was yet ſore in the land. Thoſe points being properly adjuſted, the good man makes one effort more, and diſcharges the laſt duty of a father, for, he calleth his other ſons together, to bleſs them. The verſe which ſummons them, has a ſolemnity ſuited to the occaſion: "Gather your-"ſelves together, ye ſons of Jacob; and "hearken ye ſons of Iſrael." When they are aſſembled, with what pomp of words, and inſpiration of ideas, doth he addreſs them! The advances of death ſeem to have

have been loſt, or, rather, Death himſelf was enamoured of his eloquence; he ſtood, as it were, ſuſpended, and could not ſilence the tongue till every ſyllable was uttered. The prophet—the parent—I had almoſt ſaid, the God—is in every ſentence of this noble chapter, and he who can read it without catching ſome part of the enthuſiaſm, muſt have as little reliſh for compoſition, as for religion. And here, I cannot help wondering, that the Bible is not oftener quoted and read, as an authority, by the lovers, even of polite learning, and literary taſte. The names of Pindar, Demoſthenes, and our own Mr. Gray, are conſidered, by many, in point of ſublimity, as the very children of the ſun, while the Bible lies gathering the duſt of diſuſe upon ſome ſolitary ſhelf, like an ineſtimable jewel in poſſeſſion of a peaſant, who is unconſcious of its value. And yet, it were no difficult labour to prove, by parallel paſſages, that the boldeſt and nobleſt flights of theſe moderns (however elegant they may be when not brought to ſo ſevere a teſt), are very feeble

feeble efforts, when compared to that glowing fire of imagination—that irreſiſtable force of language, and that ſublimity of arrangement, ſo remarkable in many parts of the ſcriptures. As an inſtance or two, let us run the enraptured eye over a few verſes of this very chapter.

"Reuben, thou art my firſt-born, my "might, and the beginning of my ſtrength; "the excellency of dignity, and the excel- "lency of power!" Was there ever a bolder, or more finiſhed climax! At the fiftieth peruſal, it would afford a man of taſte, freſh beauty to begin again.

"Judah is a lion's whelp; from the "prey, my ſon, thou art gone up: he "ſtooped down, he couched as a lion, as "an old lion; who ſhall rouſe him up? "Binding his fole unto the vine, and his "aſſes colt unto the choice vine; he waſh- "ed his garments in wine, and his cloaths "in the blood of grapes. His eyes ſhall "be red with wine, and his teeth white "with milk."

Once

Once more. "Joſeph is a fruitful "bough, even a fruitful bough by *a well*, "whoſe brances *run over the wall*."

"The archers have ſorely grieved him, "and ſhot at him, and hated him.

"But his bow abode in ſtrength, and the "arms of his hands was made ſtrong by "the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: "from thence is the ſhepherd, the ſtone of "Iſrael."

"Even by the God of thy father, who "ſhall help thee, and by the Almighty, "who ſhall bleſs thee with bleſſings of "Heaven above, bleſſings of the deep that "lieth under, bleſſings of the breaſts, and "of the womb."

"The bleſſings of thy father have pre-"vailed *over* the bleſſings of my progenitors "unto the utmoſt bound of the everlaſting "hills; they ſhall be on the head of Jo-"ſeph, and on the crown of the head of "him that was ſeparated from his brethren."

The

The 22d verſe relating to Joſeph is inimitable: the idea of the *fruitful bough* is a is a fine compariſon, but receives prodigious heightning from the circumſtance of planting it by a *well*, and the picture becomes quite complete, when, in conſequence of theſe advantages of ſituation, its branches are ſaid to *run over the wall.* The whole of this image enjoys all the conſtituent beauties of a happy ſimile. It is exact, familiar, unaffected, and conciſe.

As ſoon as the venerable Jacob had ended this divine rhapſody of a departing ſpirit, we are told, that he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghoſt. All-amiable and excellent as he was, he felt, in ſome degree, the tax of pain, which the errors of Eve intailed upon her poſterity—the pang of expiration—and then was gathered to his people.

ESSAY XVIII.

GENEROSITY of JOSEPH.

PASSAGE.

AND WHEN JOSEPH'S BRETHREN SAW THAT THEIR FATHER WAS DEAD, THEY SAID: JOSEPH WILL PERADVENTURE HATE US, AND WILL CERTAINLY REQUITE US ALL THE EVIL WHICH WE DID UNTO HIM.

HOW natural was this apprehenſion! Guilt ſeldom conſiders the benevolence of others, but dwells upon its own conſcious unworthineſs; and thoſe who are degraded in their *own* eſtimation, have ſlight notions of ſuperior characters. Had theſe young men reflected upon the gentle and complacent nature of Joſeph, they could never have *cheriſhed* a fear of this ſort. When the matter was told to this tender-hearted brother, he wept. Sweet benign ſpirit! Thou couldeſt not bear the imputation of cruelty—the bare idea of ought

ought unamiable touched thee to the quick, and from the lips of brethren—it was a wound that ſmarted through the ſoul. What pathetic ſentiments are furniſhed by his anſwer! "Riſe, riſe, my brethren, "fear not." Am I in the place of God? Shall I, man of frailty, preſumptuouſly aſſume the privilege of judgment! Shall I dare to poiſe the omnipotent ſcale, and criticiſe on the great plan of univerſal regulation!—Fie upon it; I turn bluſhingly away from the impious thought! Place me not then, my dear friends, in ſo improper a ſituation: cloathe me no more in the majeſty of Heaven; but think of me as I really am—a man—an *imperfect* man like yourſelves, liable to equal infirmities, and only kept from falling by the immediate preſence and providence of the God of me, and of my fathers. Nor is it meet, ye invite forgiveneſs, ſince ye have been evidently the inſtrument of much felicity. *God meant it to good:* i. e. infinite happineſs is adduced from that which appeared, at firſt, to be evil. Forbear then to ſuſpect your

your brother. So far from touching the minuteſt hair of your heads with a finger of harm, I will nouriſh both you and your little ones. Ye may expect, nay, ye may command every inſtance of affection within my power. Behold our father, full of days and of honour, lies ſleeping in the grave: think not—ah think not—Joſeph will diſturb the ſacred aſhes, by reviving our childiſh diſagreements. Soft lie his venerable bones, and peaceable be his aſhes in the protection of the God of Iſrael. See—my brother—ſee the tear is in my eye as I reflect upon thy fears: but I conjure ye to be comforted—to know me better—Let this embrace—in which my heart gives vigour to my arms—let this cordial embrace be the ſeal of eternal confidence, and the cement of a brother's fondeſt tenderneſs to his brethren.

I do not think we have an image conceived in nature, or expreſſed in language, more agreeable to the mind, than that, which is conveyed to us in the ſubſequent verſe:

verſe: "And Joſeph ſaw Ephraim's chil-
"dren of the *third generation*; and the
"children of Machir, the *ſon of Manaſſeh*,
"were brought up *upon Joſeph's knees*."
We naturally wiſh happineſs, health, and long life, to great and excellent characters. How pleaſing and pictureſque, therefore, is the ſcene here exhibited? *He* who had been ſo admirable a ſon—a parent—a friend and a brother—at length, retiring from the buſtles of active life, enjoys the private pleaſures of retreat. He amuſes himſelf with domeſtic concerns, enters into all the relaxing and delicious cares of the cradle, and finds much to ſooth, and much to ſolace the decline of his days, amidſt the prettineſs, and the prattle of a nurſery. *Such* was his fate, that he ſaw his childrens children proſper beneath his eye. Often, no doubt, were the little ones, fed by his hand, and foſtered in his boſom: and, as for the children of Machir, they were—gracious Heaven, what a melting idea!—they were brought up *upon his knees*.

ESSAY

ESSAY XIX.

The BIRTH and BRAVERY of MOSES.

PASSAGE.

AND THERE WENT A MAN OUT OF THE HOUSE OF LEVI, AND TOOK TO WIFE A DAUGHTER OF LEVI.

AND THE WOMAN CONCEIVED, AND BARE A SON.

THERE are ſome beautiful and remarkable circumſtances concerning the birth of Moſes, and they are told (as uſual) with all imaginable accuracy and ſimplicity. The contrivance of concealing him in an ark of bull-ruſhes, is inconceivably maternal: nor is there leſs prettineſs, in the deſcription of his being found by Pharoah's daughter. This young woman came to bathe herſelf at the river, and her maidens walked along by the river's ſide, and when ſhe ſaw the little ark almoſt floating

ing amongſt the flags, ſhe had the curioſity to direct her maid to fetch it. Upon her opening the ruſhy cradle, ſhe ſaw the babe; and, behold it wept. Oh Heaven, what an incident this, for the heart of a woman! The tear upon its innocent face aſſailed the human feelings, and ſubdued them: the virgin had compaſſion on him: for, ſhe ſent him privately to be nurſed, defrayed the charge from her own coffer, and adopt him as her own. As his infancy was rendered peculiar by the policy of his mother, and the patronage of the daughter of the very man who had given orders for the deſtruction of every new-born male; ſo his youth was diſtinguiſhed with marks of honour by his own bravery. "And it came "to paſs, in thoſe days, when Moſes was "grown, that he went out unto his bre"thren, and looked on their burthens, and "he eſpied an Egyptian ſmiting an He"brew, one of his brethren: and he look"ed this way, and that way, and when he "ſaw that there was no man, he ſlew the "Egyptian and hid him in the ſand."

This

This record of the lad's courage, fraternal love, and ſenſe of equity, is very artfully introduced, and endears him to us, before he enters upon thoſe important ſcenes in which Providence afterwards places him. To give additional luſtre to his character, we next find him engaged in a ſecond cauſe of redreſs and juſtice; for, finding two men engaged in a fight, he took the ſide of the weaker party, and boldly reprehended the aggreſſor. From the reply of this man, however, who alluded to his conteſt with the Egyptian, he had reaſon to fear the matter had, by ſome means, reached the ear of Pharoah: and this brings about another change of his juvenile fortunes. He fled from danger to Midian, and ſat himſelf down by a well. Here, in a little time, his intrepid and honeſt temper had a freſh opportunity to ſhew itſelf, and the graces of his mind again break forth. It happened that the ſeven daughters of the prieſt of Midian came to the well to water their father's flocks, and that the ſhepherds came and

drove them away. What, insult a circle of women in their humane employments! How could so sweet and courteous a spirit brook such dastardy! He instantly rose in their defence, and, in defiance of opposition, provided their flocks with water. And this conduct produced another alteration in our hero's circumstances: for, when the father of the damsels understood what the young man had done, he rebuked his daughters that they so little regarded the rights of hospitality and gratitude, as not to press upon the kind stranger an invitation. "And he said unto them, where "is he? Why is it that ye have left the "man? Call him, that he may eat bread." Moses came and refreshed himself, and so endeared himself in that interview, as to dwell there; and, in the end, such was the friendship between them, that he became husband to one of the very daughters whom he had assisted at the well.

It is to be noted here, that in this chapter, which contains the story of his younger years,

years, every hiſtoric fact is ſet down, which might recommend Moſes to our eſteem; and yet that nothing oſtentatious, or inconſiſtent with his time of life, is admitted. And here ceaſes the narrative of his youthful tranſactions, the future parts of his ſtory exhibit him in the ſublimeſt ſtation imaginable, enjoying frequent conferences with the God who had reſpect unto his integrity, and who inſtituted him the meſſenger of Providence in the important concerns of Pharoah, and the unfortunate children of Iſrael.

ESSAY XX.

THE MIRACLES.

PASSAGE.

AND MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS, THE SISTER OF AARON, TOOK A TIMBREL IN HER HAND; AND ALL THE WOMEN WENT OUT AFTER HER WITH TIMBRELS, AND WITH DANCES.

AND MIRIAM ANSWERED THEM, SING UNTO THE LORD, FOR HE HATH TRIUMPHED GLORIOUSLY: THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER HATH HE THROWN INTO THE SEA.

THE whole proceſs of the circumſtances attending the miracles exhibited in Egypt are equally amazing, awful, and peculiar; and a peruſal of them cannot fail exciting the ſincereſt piety and veneration for the power, who brought them to ſo happy a period.

It is extremely intereſting to trace the wonders of the Almighty in theſe memorable and multiplied exertions of his omni-

potence. He begins with milder miracles, and with ſome ſlighter inſtances of his univerſal authority; remembering the divine attribute of mercy in the midſt of juſtice, tender even in ſeverity, and reluctant to puniſh.

Thus, the rod turned into a ſerpent, which is the firſt teſtimony of power, is leſs alarming than converting the river into blood. And the ſame kind of ſagacious climax is obſervable in the various viſitations of the Divine diſpleaſure by peſtilence; the plague of frogs was not ſo utterly terrible as that of lice, and even that again, yielded in point of horror to the peſtilence of flies.

The recitation of three verſes will prove this more plainly. "And the river ſhall "bring forth frogs abundantly, which ſhall "go up and come into the houſe, and into thy *bedchamber*, and *upon* thy bed, and into "the houſe of thy ſervants, and upon thy "people,

"people, and into thine *ovans*, and into "thy kneading-troughs."

Thus every private comfort was deſtroyed, and it does not ſeem eaſy to encreaſe the torment, yet we find, this was torment only in the ſmalleſt degree.

"And Aaron ſtretched out his hand "with his rod, and ſmote the duſt of the "earth, and it became lice both in man "and in beaſt: *All the duſt of the land* be-"came lice throughout all the land of "Egypt."

The very nature of this creature is more abhorrent to humanity than the other, and was, by ſo much, the more irkſome, nauſeous, and intolerable; yet even this puniſhment admitted addition.

"And there came a grievous ſwarm of "flies into the houſe of Pharoah, and into "his ſervants houſes, and into all the land "of

" of Egypt, and the land was *corrupted* by " reaſon of the ſwarm of flies."

In the former inſtances, we do not find that either the frogs or lice were in a ſtate of putrefaction, but here they bred corrupted matter, and tainted the whole land. But ſorer ſeverities even than theſe were neceſſary to ſoften the more than marble heart of this incorrigible Pharoah, and at laſt, locuſts of ſtupendous ſize (ſuch as were never ſeen before, and are never to be ſeen hereafter) ſtung him into *ſome* ſenſe of obedience. It was not even in the power of darkneſs—ſuch darkneſs as might *be felt* —what an idea! to ſubdue him entirely: And God himſelf was obliged, as it were, to go forth in the dead of night with the ſword of general deſolation. This effected the great buſineſs of reformation, and reſtored the Iſraelites to long-loſt liberty. And now, having laid aſide his terrors, he diſplayed ſuch a train of *merciful* miracles, as no language but that of the ſcriptures could give us the fainteſt idea. With great

great and perfect propriety, indeed, may the children of Iſrael be called a Choſen Nation, and a People of God. What did he not exert in their favour? By *day*, he went before them, in the pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by *night*, in a pillar of fire, to give them light. When purſued by the Egyptians, he fought on their ſide. And the cloud came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Iſrael, and it was a cloud and darkneſs *to them*, but it was light by night to *theſe*. Nor was this all.

He cauſed the ſea to go back by a ſtrong eaſt wind all night, and made the ſea dry land, and divided the waters, ſo that this favoured people went in the midſt of the ſea upon dry ground; and the "very "waters were a wall unto them on their "right hand, and on their left."

And yet all theſe miracles could not keep this ungrateful race from diſcontent. They murmur for water, and the fluid

which was naturally bitter, is inſtantly ſweetned: They murmur for bread, and a delicacy is directly provided. They murmur a ſecond time for water, and behold the ſoftened rock ſupplies them with a copious ſtream immediately. In ſhort, the tranſactions betwixt God and man in reſtoring the Iſraelites from captivity to Canaan, are ſo many admirable evidences of almighty power on the one hand, and of human obſtinacy and weakneſs on the other, that although they have been illuſtrated by a thouſand divines, it is ſurely impoſſible for any writer to paſs them by in ſilence, even though he ſhould hazard the fault of repeating the remarks of his predeceſſors.

ESSAY

ESSAY XXI.

INSTITUTES of MOSES.

PASSAGE.

AND IF A MAN CAUSE A BLEMISH IN HIS NEIGHBOUR; AS HE HATH DONE, SO SHALL IT BE DONE UNTO HIM.

THE laws of Moſes are, in part, very properly aboliſhed, being, indeed, only inſtituted for local occaſions, and adapted to the temper of the times. But there are others which, with little or no alteration, are, and deſerve to be, of eternal force. In the two verſes directly preceding this paſſage, there is a very excellent diſtinction made in point of puniſhments and offences. "He that killeth a "man ſhall ſurely be put to death: and "he that killeth a beaſt, ſhall ſurely make "it good." Thus the human perſon is rendered ſacred, and the animal, which is

private

private property, is made ſecure to the proprietor. Methinks the following verſe may be conſidered as one of the great and original foundations of ſocial preſervation: "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for "tooth." It is at this very day the true recriminating principle, not, indeed, quite literally, but eventually: and who can call the rectitude of it in queſtion? In reading theſe antient records, however, we find ſeveral crimes penable, which are now, though highly atrocious, ſcarce within the letter of the law. The blaſphemer, and ſabbath-breaker, for inſtance, was *ſtoned*; and now the price of an oath is, at worſt, but a ſhilling: and the other matter, for the moſt part, is no object of attention. There are many minute articles in the code of Moſes ſtill in being amongſt us: thus, an hired horſe, dying upon its journey, is, to this day, as it was formerly; being an hired thing, it came for his hire. The matter and cuſtom of *gleaning* was, certainly, firſt derived from the following command:

"When

"When thou cutteſt down thine har-
"veſt in the field, and haſt forgot a ſheaf
"in the field, thou ſhalt not go again to
"fetch it; it ſhall be for the ſtranger, for
"the fatherleſs, and for the widow; that
"the Lord thy God may bleſs thee in all
"the work of thy hands."

The term of an *apprenticeſhip* ſeems to originate from the following inſtitute: "If "thou buy an Hebrew ſervant, ſix years "he ſhall ſerve, and at the end of the ſe-"venth he ſhall go out free: and if a man "ſell his daughter for a maid-ſervant, ſhe "ſhall not *go out*, as the men ſervants do." There is, I think, no doubt, but this is the foundation of the rule of allotting the harder labour of the fields to the male, and the eaſier cares of the houſe to the female. Theſe are, indeed, curious and ſmall; but ſurely, no man will think them *unintereſting* remarks. Now I am upon the ſubject of the ſtatutes of Moſes, I cannot neglect mention of various humane and ſocial inſtitutions, ſome of which are very improperly abrogated.

"If

" If thou meet thine enemy's ox, or aſs,
" going aſtray, thou ſhalt ſurely bring it
" back to him again: if thou ſee the aſs
" of him that hateth thee, lying under his
" burthen, thou ſhalt ſurely help him."

It is much to be feared, the enemies of the preſent day will ſcarce forbear *ſmiling* at this injunction, ſo far from obeying it.

" Thou ſhalt not countenance a poor
" man in his cauſe.

In one ſenſe, this is moſt rigidly obſerved in all the courts of Juſtice.

" And if thou ſell ought of thy neigh-
" bour, or buy ought of thy neighbour,
" ye ſhall not oppreſs one another."

The *modern* maxim of ſtiking a bargain, is, perhaps, ſomething different from this.

" And if thy brother be waxen poor, and
" fallen in decay with thee; then, thou
" ſhalt

"ſhalt relieve him, ſo that he may live "with thee."

It is really painful to comment, and draw parallels betwixt antient and modern times, when we are compelled to cenſure the latter in ſo many caſes:—let us, therefore, cloſe the ſubject.

ESSAY XXII.

Story of Balaam and his Ass.

PASSAGE.

AND THE LORD OPENED THE MOUTH OF THE ASS, AND SHE SAID UNTO BALAAM, WHAT HAVE I DONE UNTO THEE, THAT THOU HAST SMITTEN ME THESE THREE TIMES?

IN whatever light this matter is viewed, whether as an operation of the Deity (which we have no right to diſpute, ſince the ſame power which can command water from the rock, can as eaſily inſpire the animal with argument) or whether we conſider it in the light merely of a moral fable, it is wonderfully beautiful and pathetic. I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate it both ſcripturally and hiſtorically.

"Now Balaam was riding upon his aſs, "and his two ſervants were with him."

In

In the very ſetting out of the journey, it was a thing diſpleaſing to the Deity, and the firſt hints of his diſpleaſure were very remarkably diſplayed. "And the aſs ſaw "the angel of the Lord ſtanding in the "way, and his ſword drawn in his hand." Upon this, the poor creature, very naturally aſtoniſhed at ſuch a ſpectable, turned aſide out of the way, and went into the field; "And Balaam ſmote the aſs to turn "her into the way." In oppoſition however to blows, the animal awhile went on, till the ſame angelic appearance, ſtanding in a path of the vineyards, made her fly in terror towards the wall, againſt which ſhe unfortunately cruſhed the foot of her maſter: and for this ſecond offence he ſmote her again. But ſtill the celeſtial viſitant reſolved, as it were, to obſtruct, or at leaſt to delay the journey, ſtood at laſt in ſo narrow a place, that there was no poſſibility of paſſing either to the right hand, or to the left; and when the aſs found herſelf thus beſet, and thus thwarted in all her endeavours—what could ſhe do?

She

She had reſpect to the commands of her lord, but ſhe was unable to obey them; poſſibly too ſhe was more than affrighted —ſhe might be *awed* by the figure before her—ſhe, therefore, fell down; and Balaam, conſidering this third treſpaſs as a ſtill greater aggravation of obſtinacy, ſmote the aſs with his ſtaff. Then it was that the Power, who knew the innocence of the poor thing, took pity upon her ſufferings, and, to put at once an end to the hard uſage, her mouth was opened, that ſhe might plead her own cauſe with the man, and enter into a pathetic remonſtrance with him upon the ſubject of his barbarity. "And "ſhe ſaid unto Balaam, What have I done "unto thee, that thou haſt ſmitten me "theſe three times?" But Balaam was now too violently angry to attend even to miracles, and, without regarding the circumſtance, as being preternatural, he replied to it merely as an ordinary queſtion, by wiſhing, in the vehemence of his heart, a ſword was in his hand, that he might kill the offender upon the ſpot. And now

ſucceeds

ſucceeds an anſwer which might melt the hardeſt heart, and ſoften the compaſſionate into tears. "Am not I thine aſs upon "which thou haſt ridden ever ſince I was "thine, unto this day? Was I ever wont "to do ſo unto thee?" Imagination here unavoidably extends the commentary. How, Balaam, canſt thou thus ill entreat thy ſervant? Have I at any time, ſave now, reſiſted thy deſigns, and have not thy ſlighteſt wiſhes been to me in the nature of injunctions? Thrice haſt thou lifted up thine arm in anger againſt me, and thrice have I borne the anguiſh without complaining. Ah, ungentle maſter—couldeſt thou not conceive that ſome peculiar occaſion prevented my obedience? if haply nothing ſtruck *thine* eye as an obſtacle, ſurely, thou mighteſt have relied upon one, whoſe fidelity, both by day and by night, thou haſt ſo often experienced. Am I not the old ſlave of your pleaſure, contented with whatever food it is convenient for you to allot me—nothing loath to perform the labours to which I was born, and to earn the herb

herb of the field before I ate it! To this expoſtulation, which one would think might have force enough to reſtrain the iron hand of inhumanity itſelf, Balaam replied, by confeſſing that her arguments were true: "Was I ever *wont* to do "ſo unto thee?" *Nay*, anſwered Balaam.

Soon after this dialogue, the angel convinced Balaam of his fault, and he then bowed his face to the earth—ſtruck, probably, with a ſenſe of double impropriety —Why haſt thou ſmitten thine aſs?—If a man was to be fairly aſked this queſtion in the courts of moral equity, thoſe courts where Conſcience ſits as judge, how would he be able to anſwer it? There is no need to run this fine narrative into the perplexities of ſubtle and latent meaning, it is ſufficiently admirable as an addreſs to the human heart. And, indeed, the ſcriptures are not more earneſt and perſuaſive in the cauſe of compaſſion, than in the cauſe of ſalvation. There is ſcarce a chapter in which pity, that ſweet emanation of Heaven, is not enjoined; and that the reader

reader might not be fatigued with the ſameneſs of ſentiment, or tired with likeneſs of language, the ſtyle of the ſubject is varied, almoſt a thouſand times: ſometimes the lovely quality of mercy is recommended to us, (as in the preſent inſtance) by a tender and attracting narrative—ſometimes by a beautiful allegory, or parable; and very often by a conciſe moral ſentence, expreſſed in a way ſo irreſiſtibly ſtriking, that we are led to the practice of the virtue, not only by a veneration for its intrinſic charms, but by the additional graces which it receives from compoſition.

Even the foreſt *curſes* in the ſcriptures are, for the moſt part, againſt *cruelty*, and to recommend kindneſs: and in the *beginning* of the 22d chapter of Deuteronomy, i. e. from verſe the firſt to verſe the ſeventh, there are ſentiments of the moſt humane and affectionate tendency that ever were read, conceived, inſpired, or practiſed. Let every man who has a heart, peruſe them—I will not add—*attentively*—becauſe,

to

to peruſe them *negligently*, where any degree of *feeling* is beſtowed, is utterly impoſſible.

What muſt have been the ſenſations of Balaam when he underſtood from the lip of a Divinity, that unleſs the aſs had turned in the very manner he did, the maſter would have been ſlain, and the ſervant preſerved alive? How extreme ſhould be the caution, and how palpable the error before puniſhment is inflicted; for ſuch is the infirmity of man, he may thrice ſmite his preſerver for thoſe very actions, which, ultimately, produce the moſt deſirable and eminent bleſſings; and when once ſuch a miſtake happens, and the indignity is given, where is the man poſſeſſed of ſufficient effrontery to meet the eye of his benefactor? Every ſtroke we have given returns invigorated upon ourſelves, and we feel the blows ſhamefully burning upon our cheeks.

ESSAY XXIII.

DEATH of MOSES.

PASSAGE.

AND THE LORD SAID UNTO MOSES, GET THEE UP INTO THIS MOUNT ABARIM, AND SEE THE LAND WHICH I HAVE GIVEN UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

AND WHEN THOU HAST SEEN IT, THOU ALSO, SHALT BE GATHERED UNTO THY PEOPLE.

HOW few are there at this day in the world, whom ſuch a command would not terrify? It is plainly aſcertaining the moſt aweful moment of mortality: yet the excellent perſon to whom it was ſpoken, appears to have received it without the leaſt alarming emotion; and that, not becauſe he was inſenſible, but becauſe he had talked with his maker as with a friend, and becauſe he was aſſured. Being informed of his own death, indeed, he was anxious to fill up the vacancy which he ſhould

leave, properly, and therefore for the ſake of poſterity, petitioned for a ſucceſſor. In theſe times, ſuch intelligence, even though it were communicated in a dream, would diſorder all the felicity of the day, and the very beſt of us, would dread the advances of the night, leſt the horrid images ſhould again appear: but if, as in this place, the tidings were conveyed by the voice of God himſelf, although the event was not to happen for fifty years, the whole ſcheme of life (however delightfully our imaginations had before coloured it, however bright our expectation, or ſplendid our circumſtances) would be inſtantly deſtroyed: The radiance of the morning enwrapt ſuddenly amidſt the gloom of midnight, gives us but a faint ſimile to expreſs the aſtoniſhment and the anguiſh, that would, upon ſuch an occaſion, ſeize the ſoul: Inſtead of attending to our ſecular affairs, we ſhould be incapable either of buſineſs or pleaſure; even intereſt would want its uſual ſtimulus, the verieſt Nigard would forget his unviſited hoard, and at laſt,

when

when the blow was juſt deſcending, with a fearful voice, and trembling hand, he would *appoint a ſucceſſor*; or what is full as probable, his apprehenſions would predominate over all ideas of natural juſtice, or elſe the ſtrange ſuggeſtions of at leaſt a poſſiblity, that deſtiny might delay to diſcharge its promiſe, would induce him to die amidſt the deceits of hope, and leave his unſecured property to the rapacity of law, and the conteſt of various claimants. Moſes, however, is repreſented as going on, immediately after this, in the great affairs which were allotted to him. Undiſturbed by the common terrors of ordinary men, we ſtill find him tranſmitting the laws of life and eternity, from God to man: He continued, as before, to ſettle with the ſame ſagacity, the moral, civil and religious ſyſtem: He was the amanuenſis of Providence; and after he had done all the appointed ſervice to ſociety, he died at the age of one hundred and twenty years, in the fulleſt poſſeſſion of every faculty; for "his eye was "not dim, nor his natural force abated."

And yet, as there has not arisen another like Moses, whom God knew face to face; and, as the life of man is, since considerably shortened (insomuch that all the scriptural similes of its brevity are in a moral sense unable to give us the precise idea) the concealment of the last hour is a particular indulgence to us: Prescience would distress the most virtuous mind, and in every light *we* can possibly view *this* matter, ignorance is bliss, and foreknowledge, would, to all intents and purposes, be agony.

ESSAY

ESSAY XXIV.

Story of Caleb and Othniel.

PASSAGE.

AND CALEB SAID, HE THAT SMITETH KIRJATH-SEPHER, AND TAKETH IT TO HIM WILL I GIVE ACHSAH MY DAUGHTER TO WIFE.

IN the ſhort, but very pleaſing narratives of Caleb and Othniel, bravery and piety are powerfully recommended and rewarded. Caleb's ſtory is related by himſelf in the 14th chapter of Joſhua, from whence we eaſily ſee into his character. Enamoured of glory himſelf, he naturally loved it in others; and being called to battle in a righteous cauſe, he propoſed, by way of encouragement to the youthful heroes of his day, the moſt precious prize in his poſſeſſion—even Achſah, his daughter. This propoſal fired the boſom and,

animated the exertions of the youth Othniel, who took it, and received the beautiful reward. With this fair preſent, it ſhould ſeem, he led a life of honour and virtue, ever warmly devoted to his God, and his country: for, after the death of Joſhua, when the children of Iſrael again relapſed into diſobedience, and ingratitude, and the Almighty ſold them to the king of Meſopotamia, as a puniſhment, Othniel was the perſon who, upon their repentance, was ordained to deliver them from the chains of captivity: and ſuch was the wiſdom of this hero's *mind*, that after he had reſcued them from ſlavery by the valour of his arm, he kept the land in the compoſure of peace forty years. All that time the place had reſt; nor do we hear of any farther flagrant inſtances of treſpaſs, or violation, till after his death; upon which, that diſobedient people once more began to revolt, and degenerate.

The union of magnanimity and moral goodneſs well deſerve the higheſt treaſures of

of reward; and it were to be wiſhed, that the courage of Othniel was conſtantly enriched by the principles of Othniel. War, in *itſelf*, is certainly only a more legal butchery than private murder, but when the ſword is drawn in a cauſe like this, where integrity was blended with intrepidity, every boſom is officious to ſhare the honours, and every hand ready to beſtow the laurel. The father-in-law of Othniel was, himſelf not inſenſible, however, to the *deſerts* of victory, and we find him aſſerting his claim before Joſhua, like a ſoldier. How beautifully has he contrived to rehearſe his own ſucceſſes, without vainglory, or oſtentation! And he ſpeaks of the ſervices he has done, and is ſtill able to do the ſtate, without incurring from delicacy itſelf the character of a boaſter. "Forty years old was I, (ſays he) when "Moſes, the ſervant of the Lord ſent me "from Kadeſh-barnea to eſpy out the "land; and I brought him word again, as "it was in mine heart. And Moſes ſware "on that day, ſaying, ſurely the land

"whereon thy feet have trodden, ſhall be
"thine inheritance, and thy childrens' for
"ever; becauſe thou haſt wholly followed
"the Lord thy God. And now, behold
"the Lord hath kept me alive, as he ſaid,
"theſe forty and five years, even ſince the
"Lord ſpake this word unto Moſes, while
"the children of Iſrael wandered in the
"wilderneſs; and now, lo, I am this day,
"fourſcore and five years old: and yet, I
"am as ſtrong this day as I was in the day
"that Moſes ſent me: as my ſtrength was
"then, even ſo is my ſtrength now for
"war, both to go out, and to come in.
"Now, therefore, give me this mountain,
"&c. if ſo be the Lord be with me then
"I ſhall be able to drive them out."

His plea was irreſiſtible. The whole ſpeech was ſuſtained by a manly firmneſs, and a diſdain of all that nauſeous incenſe which is too frequently laviſhed by the ſervile petitioner. In conſequence of this oration, Joſhua bleſſed him, and willingly gave that which was requeſted.

His

His own conqueſts thus paid, he was reſolved to do juſtice to congenial merit: and, as an inſtance of his love of glory, and an example to others, he gave his child to him who ſhould moſt deſerve her. Othniel had no ſooner obtained her, than the noble parent ſettled upon their iſſue a freſh inheritance of fields and ſprings. Here it is not eaſy to glance at a deficiency of modern times—a deficiency long deplored, and ſtill remaining to be ſo. Where is the adequate meed for the preſent race of conquerors? Are the deliverers of our country for ever to be neglected—to ſtarve after the toils of war, upon the ſtipend of divided pay, and to ſee the hand of power lifting up over their venerable heads, the beardleſs babies of the troop to the very top round of the ladder of preferment, while *they* are condemned to languiſh at the view, and, even in the ſeaſon of the ſilver hair, ſtand uncovered in the preſence of their puerile ſuperiors?—O, Britain, where is thy gratitude! O, ye diſtributers of honour, whither is fled the ſpirit of recompenſe?

ESSAY XXV.

Story of Naomi and Ruth.

PASSAGE.

AND RUTH SAID, INTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE, OR TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER THEE; FOR WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO; AND WHERE THOU LODGEST, I WILL LODGE: THY PEOPLE, SHALL BE MY PEOPLE; AND THY GOD, MY GOD.

THERE never was any thing more happily conceived, or more ſweetly told than the book of Ruth. It ſeems chiefly deſigned to exhibit to us a lively and high-coloured picture of the force of female friendſhip on the one hand, and the weakneſs of reſolution, when oppoſed by cuſtom, on the other. The general circumſtances of the ſtory being uncommonly fine, will ſpeak beſt for themſelves, and afford proper comments in the progreſs of reciting them.

When

When the famine raged with much ſeverity in her native land, Naomi, and her huſband Elimelech, and their two ſons, went to ſojourn in the country of Moab; but Elimelech died, and Naomi, the widow, was left with her children: ſoon after this, thoſe children "took them wives of the "women of Moab; the name of the one "was Orpher, and the other Ruth." It came to paſs that the young men, their huſbands, died alſo, both of them, and now the poor widow was bereaved of her ſons and her huſband. Unable, therefore, to bear any longer a place in which every ſcene preſented ſome image of loſt endearment, or revived ſome diſtracting idea of conjugal or maternal tenderneſs, ſhe reſolved to ſeek ſolace from her ſorrow, by change of reſidence. So ſhe aroſe with her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth, that ſhe might return from the country of Moab. It preſently occured to the poor woman, as ſhe was journeying on her way, that if ſhe was herſelf unhappy, it was no teſtimony of her affection to involve her ſons'

wives

wives in equal calamities; and judging the reception she would be likely to meet in the land of Judah, entering it desolate, unfriended, and unadorned, she paused a moment, and thus pathetically addressed the young widows: "Go, my children, each "of you return to your mother's house; "the Lord deal kindly with you as you "have dealt with the dead, and with me. "The Lord grant that ye may find rest, "each of you, in the house of your dear "deceased husband."—Having uttered this short prayer for their happiness, she kissed them, and prepared to depart alone. How true to nature was their reply! They did not pour forth unmeaning compliments of condolence—They did not interchange any idle civilities of sorrow, for their anguish was too sincere for ceremony—Neither did they enter into the parade of promising future interviews—for they spoke not at all. The extreme of grief has, at the first surprize, little to do with language—at the most, it bursts into short exclamations, as if it would shew the impossibility

of

of proceeding: for our alleviation, therefore, in theſe caſes, that power who to every wound hath provided ſomething wherewith to heal it, gave the comfort of tears, ſo that the fullneſs of the ſad heart is, in part, diſcharged by that kindly effuſion which Providence has intended as a fountain to relieve the exceſſes of nature; either in the ſurplus of miſery, or tranſport. "They lift up their voice and "wept"—A folio could not ſo well diſplay their condition—After ſome time paſſed in this kind of ſignificant ſilence, they ſaid unto her: "Surely we will return with "thee unto thy people." Here again genuine grief diſcovers itſelf: one tender ſentence, and one only, expreſſes their deſigns and wiſhes to attend her. In ſuch caſes, conciſeneſs is nature, and circumlocution, mere art and affectation.* Perceiving the deſign

* The *pathetic*, as well as the *grand*, ſays the moſt elegant tranſlator of Longinus, is diſplayed as ſtrongly by ſilence, or a bare word, as in a number of periods. I will venture to ſay *much more ſtrongly*, by a ſentence than a volume,

deſign of the daughters, the widow-woman Naomi again began to diſſuade them, and to

lume, in *many* caſes, and in *ſome* (as in the preſent inſtance) total *ſilence* is more expreſſive and characteriſtic than the moſt feeling or forcible ſentence.

> There is a kind of mournful *eloquence*
> In a dumb grief, which ſhames all clam'rous
> Sorrow.

Or, as a bard who better underſtood the operations of the human heart, more poetically has it,

> My grief lies all within;
> And thoſe external manners of laments
> Are merely ſhadows to the *unſeen* grief
> That ſwells with *ſilence* in the tortur'd ſoul.
> There lies the ſubſtance.

When words are too weak, ſays the critic, or colours too faint to preſent a *pathos*, as the poet will be ſilent, ſo the painter will hide what he cannot ſhew:—Mr. Smith hath offered a very fine example of this, wherein the ſkill of Timanthes, the painter, is ſhewn in marking the gradations of ſorrow in a groupe of characters, till he had exhauſted the paſſions, and ſilence became neceſſary to the laſt figure in the diſtreſsful climax; but nothing can furniſh a finer illuſtration than Orpah and Ruth.

Lord Kames, however, in his chapter upon the Language of Paſſion, after having obſerved, that immoderate grief

to preſs their ſpeedy return. She painted the various diſaſters they would be liable to, in her company—told them ſhe had no more

grief is mute, becauſe complaining is ſtruggling for conſolation, hath illuſtrated that remark by ſo apt a ſtory from the 3d book of Herodotus, that I am ſure the reader will not be diſpleaſed with me for ſetting it down amongſt the notes for his ſervice.

" Cambyſes, when he conquered Egypt, took Pſam-
" menitus the king priſoner; and for trying his conſtancy,
" ordered his daughter to be dreſſed in the habit of a ſlave,
" and to be employed in bringing water from the river;
" his ſon alſo was led to execution with a halter about his
" neck. The Egyptians vented their ſorrow in tears and
" lamentations; Pſammenitus only with a downcaſt eye,
" remained ſilent. Afterward meeting one of his compa-
" nions, a man advanced in years, who, being plundered
" of all, was begging alms, he wept bitterly, calling him
" by his name. Cambyſes, ſtruck with wonder, demand-
" ed an anſwer to the following queſtion :" ' Pſammeni-
' tus, thy maſter Cambyſes is deſirous to know, why,
' after thou hadſt ſeen thy daughter ſo ignominiouſly treat-
' ed, and thy ſon led to execution, without exclaiming or
' weeping, thou ſhouldſt be ſo highly concerned for a poor
' man, no way related to thee?' " Pſammenitus re-
" turned the following anſwer :" ' Son of Cyrus, the
' calamities of my family are too great to leave me the pow-
' er of weeping; but the misfortunes of a companion, re-
' duced in his old age to want of bread, is a fit ſubject for
' lamentation.'

more ſons to give them for huſbands—nor even a hut, however uncheary, and forlorn, to accommodate them with in her own country—and furthermore, that ſhe had not wherewithal to repoſe her own head upon, if, after the fatigues of travel, ſhe ſhould haply arrive ſafe. And, now ſhe once more preſſed the women in a farewel embrace, whilſt ſhe cloſed her arguments with another bleſſing, more melting even than the firſt. "Nay—my daugh-"ters—weep not I entreat you. It griev-"eth me more for your ſakes than my own, "that the hand of the Lord hath gone "out againſt me." This was the touch-ſtone: ſhe had now fairly diſcovered all the horrors of her ſituation, and ſhewed herſelf a woman without accommodation—a traveller without hope of reſt at the end of her journey, and a widow, without one to take her by the hand, and ſay unto her, Welcome unfortunate—welcome again to thine own country. The picture was too darkly ſhaded for Orpah. The dread of poverty, and all its ſable catalogue of terrors,

terrors, ſtruck her at once: ſhe ſhed the tribute of a few more tears—ſacrificed a few more ſighs, and went her way. Not ſo the affectionate Ruth. How excellently marked, and that, by a ſingle word, is the conduct of each. "Orpah *kiſſed* her mo-"ther-in-law; but Ruth *clave* unto her." The ſentence though thus compreſſed, is emphatically copious in point of meaning: but, indeed, the *multum in parvo*, ſhould be one characteriſtic of the ſacred writings. "Orpah *kiſſed* her mother-in-law," i. e. ſhe gave her a farewel embrace, wept a woman's ſorrow, and left her mother to wander over the world. "But Ruth *clave* "unto her." Struck to the heart at the proſpect of ſeeing her friend and parent no more, and ſtill calling to mind the thouſand endearments which had formerly made precious her ſociety, and even feeling ſome additional ſympathy from being involved in a calamity, which aroſe from the miſchances of one houſe, and one family, ſhe endured not the idea of her departure: ſo far otherwiſe, indeed, that ſhe "*clave* un-

"to

"to her," i. e. clung round her neck—kiſſed her with an ardour, as if ſhe deſigned to leave the ſeal of her very ſoul impreſſed on her lips for ever. In vain did the noble-minded Naomi exhibit to her the various miſeries which were at hand, and againſt which, there was no comfortable proviſion —In vain did ſhe point to the example, the politic and prudent example of Orpah, her ſiſter—In ſcorn of ſuch conduct, and to cloſe at once all future diſſuaſions, ſhe thus declared, to the eternal honour of her ſex, the glowing reſolutions of her ſoul. "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return "from following after thee, for whither "thou goeſt, I will go; and where thou "lodgeſt, I will lodge: thy people ſhall "be my people, and thy God my God." The whole beauty and force of this paſſage is not ſeen at once: it is a very fine climax, and there is amazing elegance in the gradations. The full ſenſe implied, ſeems to branch out in this manner. She begins with deſiring Naomi to urge the ſubject of ſeparation no longer, ſince ſhe has completely

pletely made up her mind upon it. This is the firſt and *ſlighteſt* part. In the next place, ſhe unfolds her firſt deſign to follow her fortunes in whatever part of the habitable globe ſhe thinks proper to purſue them: but not thinking this ſufficiently expreſſive of her affection, ſhe reſolves to take up her abode in the ſame houſe with her—to lodge under the ſame roof, however poor, and to ſhare the ſame bed, however inelegant.—After this, ſhe reſolves to know no other people, than ſuch as are equally the common friends of both—to enter into no attachments, but thoſe which are united by the ſame tender ties to her dear Naomi; and to form no connections whatever, that can, in the leaſt, derogate from the love ſhe bore her. But ſhe is not contented with having delivered theſe aſſurances, for ſhe goes on, declaring that her very religion ſhall be the religion of her friend—that one faith, and one hope, ſhall animate their devotion, and that the God of one, ſhall be the God of the other. Even this does not ſatisfy her: for, ſhe

next determines not only to go with her the pilgrimage of life, but attend her *beyond* the gate of death—to die *with* her Naomi, ſhould it be her Naomi's lot to fall firſt, and to be buried at laſt in the ſame grave: and this ſhe confirmed by an immediate oath of the utmoſt importance and ſanctity amongſt the daughters of Judah: "The Lord God do ſo to me, and more "alſo, if ought but death"—ſhe might have ſaid—*if* death itſelf, part thee and me.

"When Naomi ſaw that ſhe was ſtead-"faſtly minded to go, ſhe left off perſuad-"ing her; ſo they went until they came "to Beth-lehem; and when they arrived, "it came to paſs, that all the city were "moved about them, and they ſaid, Is this "Naomi?" Here are freſh morals and freſh elegancies opened upon us: the diſconſolate Naomi had no ſooner ſet her foot upon her own land, than all thoſe little paſſions which lie lurking in the boſoms of the illiberal and the inhoſpitable, were inſtantly

inſtantly awakened. Curioſity ſurveyed the tatters which ſhe had not the ſoul to repair.—Ill-nature was, we may be ſure, officious enough to throw in her bitter ſarcaſm. Pride was ready with her inſulting offer of pity—Avarice lamented his incapacity to anſwer the good wiſhes of his heart; and in ſhort, every arrogant, every paltry propenſity was in arms againſt our defenceleſs travellers. But as Naomi originally lived in ſome degree of comfort and credit in her own country, and was now reduced, *ſhe*, of courſe, more particularly was the mark of their obloquy and converſation.

Upon entering the city, therefore, the mob flocked about her, to indulge the vulgar and villainous joy, of adding a freſh load to the heart which was already groaning under its burthen; for it is, but too generally the horrid maxim, to aſſiſt where aſſiſtance is unneceſſary, and to *deny* ſuch aſſiſtance where it may be the means of continuing life, or of promoting happineſs.

And

And they ſaid one to another—meaſuring no doubt the poor wretch from top to toe; and noteing with cruel criticiſm, every unfortunate particular—"Is this Naomi?" God of Heaven, as much as to ſay—is this the woman—the wife of Elimelech, who lived in ſuch plenty—this poor ragged wretch—this ſhadow of herſelf—"Is this Naomi?" Mercy upon us—who would have thought it? Having exhauſted all the unfeeling and hardened remarks, cuſtomary on ſuch occaſions, all their compaſſion, and all their cruelty, ended exactly in the old way:—in leaving her the loſs of ſome ſighs and tears—poorer than they found her. She ſoon found, that to rely upon the kindneſs of old friends, was but a precarious mercy: for it is not bearing too hard I fear upon human nature to ſuppoſe, that her very next-door neighbour, the very companion of all her girliſh ſports, would give with an ill grace, if ſhe gave at all, that pillow, or that bread, of which, after ſo wearyſome a journey ſhe certainly ſtood much in need. Ill uſed by the world there-

fore, ſhe began to loſe the hope of ſuch reſources—the benevolence of diſtant relations, in whoſe memory ſhe might be able to revive the images of tenderneſs, was likewiſe a fond idea, that was born and buried almoſt in the ſame inſtant. Nothing of comfort ſeemed to remain in reſerve, till the excellent Ruth, the faithful partner of her ſufferings, ſuggeſted an expedient. And ſhe ſaid unto her friend, I perceive, oh my dear Naomi, that our conveniencies muſt depend upon ourſelves, and that we muſt owe our daily bread, to our daily labour: as it is now the beginning of the harveſt, behold the opportunity of exerting ourſelves is at hand. Thou, indeed, art too much afflicted to toil: but for my part—much and tenderly as I ſympathize with thee, I am in the prime of my youth, and able to gather ſomething from the field: "Let me now therefore go and glean "ears of corn after him in whoſe ſight I "may find grace."

"Now

"Now it was ſo, that Naomi had a "kinſman of her huſband's, a mighty man "of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, "and his name was Boaz:" and it happened as Ruth was gleaning after the reapers, ſhe was ſituate on a part of the field belonging to Boaz. This circumſtance occaſioned a turn of fortune perfectly dramatic. For, Boaz, coming to take a view of his reapers, perceiving the ſtranger, ſaid unto the ſervant who was ſet over the reapers, "Whoſe damſel is this?" The ſervant's anſwer is penned with the moſt natural ſimplicity. "It is the Moabitiſh "damſel, that came back with Naomi, "out of the country of Moab: and ſhe "ſaid, I pray you let me glean, and gather "after the reapers among the ſheaves: ſo "ſhe came and hath continued amongſt us "even from the morning until now, that "ſhe tarried a little in the houſe." Something there was either in this account, or in the appearance of the object, which won much upon the favour of the landlord: for it is ſurely a ſofter voice, even than

the voice of hoſpitality, that ſpeaks in the ſequel. "Heareſt thou not my daughter? "go not I charge you to glean in any other "field, neither go from hence, but abide "here faſt by *my* maidens." I have given particular injunctions to "the *young men* "that they ſhall not touch thee. And when "thou art athirſt, go to the veſſels, and "drink of that which the young men have "drawn." Here, began the firſt fruits of her fidelity; and the partiality of Boaz made a very rapid progreſs, for in his ſecond addreſs he was more benevolent than in the firſt: He invited her to conſider herſelf, as one of his own people, to "eat "of the bread, to dip her welcome morſel "in the vinegar" at meal times, and to ſit chearfully beſide the reapers. Nay more, with his own hand—ſurely the heart extended it—"he reached her *parched* corn, "and ſhe did eat, and was ſufficed and "left." *Now* it was that Boaz began to diſcover more evidently, that, the ſpring of this generous current lay very near the heart: When ſhe was riſen up to glean after her

her repaſt, he commanded the young men to ſhew her all poſſible marks of courteſy and diſtinction. His ſtrict orders were, not to ſuffer her to gather the ſcanty pittance, ear by ear, after the cautious rake had gone over the ground, but to let *her* glean unqueſtioned, even *amongſt the ſheaves*. Nay more, they were to let ſome handfulls fall on *purpoſe* for her, and leave them for her particular gleaning: And indeed, ſuch was the ſucceſsful conſequence of theſe indulgences, that after ſhe had beat out what ſhe had been permitted to glean in one ſingle day, "it was about an ephah "of barley." This, the kind creature carried with all the expedition of affection to her friend: and when Naomi ſaw it—when the ſoul of the ſorrowful widow ſang for joy; then Ruth related to her the whole hiſtory of her good fortune, and concluding that the name of the hoſpitable owner of the land was Boaz. This intelligence revived her ſpirits like a cordial, and ſhe exclaims with the moſt animated tranſport: "the man is near a-kin to us," my be-

loved Ruth—"one of our *next* kinſmen." Often, and with equal ſucceſs, ſhe went after this into the field, and continued there to earn a very comfortable living for herſelf and her friend, even to the cloſe of the harveſt. In the mean time, the paſſion of Boaz had made a very pathetic progreſs, and the reſult of it was, that he became the honourable lover of our fair gleaner, and renewed his acquaintance with his relation Naomi, to whom he made, we are told, various preſents. Boaz and Ruth were ſoon united, and, as a convincing inſtance of the harmony in which the family lived together, we find, highly to the gratification of every elegant heart, that when Ruth preſented to Boaz a child—her firſt-born—Naomi,—after all the perils of her paſt life,—re-enjoyed the ſweets of privacy and peace: "for ſhe took the babe, "and laid it in her boſom, and became "nurſe unto it:" And I muſt not forget to add, that this very child, whoſe name was Obed, was the grandfather of the famous David, to whoſe pen, the Pſalms

are

are attributed; which, both as pieces of ſcripture and of writing, are totally unrivalled in point of energy and ſublimity, by any compoſition that hath yet been, or that probably ever will be, produced in human language.

Undoubtedly our Engliſh Virgil, the author of the Seaſons, took from this ſtory the hint of his epiſode of Palemon and Lavinia: but, beautiful as that epiſode may be, I by no means think he hath improved the preſent ſubject. Indeed, it is not *eaſy* to improve any of the ſacred narratives, nor was Mr. Thomſon a poet of ſimplicity. He hath, however, followed the original pretty cloſely, eſpecially in the principal incidents: yet Palemon is a poor copy of Boaz, and Lavinia is leſs captivating than Ruth.

But I ſhall quote Mr. Thomſon's poetical paraphraſe—for it is little more—that the reader may compare it with the original.

The lovely young Lavinia once had friends;
And fortune ſmil'd, deceitful, on her birth.
For, in her helpleſs years depriv'd of all,
Of every ſtay, ſave innocence and Heaven,
She, with her widow'd mother, feeble, old,
And poor, liv'd in a cottage, far retir'd
Among the windings of a woody vale;
By ſolitude and deep ſurrounding ſhades,
But more by baſhful modeſty, conceal'd.
Together thus they ſhunn'd the cruel ſcorn
Which virtue, ſunk to poverty, would meet
From giddy paſſion and low-minded pride:
Almoſt on nature's common bounty fed;
Like the gay birds that ſung them to repoſe,
Content, and careleſs of to-morrow's fare.
Her form was freſher than the morning roſe,
When the dew wets its leaves; unſtain'd and pure,
As is the lily, or the mountain ſnow.
The modeſt virtues mingled in her eyes,
Still on the ground dejected, darting all
Their humid beams into the blooming flowers:
Or when the mournful tale her mother told,
Of what her faithleſs fortune promis'd once,
Thrill'd in her thought, they, like the dewy ſtar
Of evening, ſhone in tears. A native grace
Sat fair-proportion'd on her poliſh'd limbs,
Veil'd in a ſimple robe, their beſt attire,
Beyond the pomp of dreſs; for lovelineſs
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,
But is when unadorn'd adorn'd the moſt.

Thoughtleſs

Thoughtleſs of beauty, ſhe was beauty's ſelf,
Recluſe amid the cloſe-embowering woods.
As in the hollow breaſt of Appenine,
Beneath the ſhelter of encircling hills,
A myrtle riſes, far from human eye,
And breathes its balmy fragrance o'er the wild;
So flouriſh'd blooming, and unſeen by all,
The ſweet Lavinia; till, at length, compell'd
By ſtrong Neceſſity's ſupreme command,
With ſmiling patience in her looks, ſhe went
To glean Palemon's fields. The pride of ſwains
Palemon was, the generous, and the rich;
Who led the rural life in all its joy
And elegance, ſuch as Arcadian ſong
Tranſmits from ancient uncorrupted times;
When tyrant cuſtom had not ſhackled man,
But free to follow nature was the mode.
He then, his fancy with autumnal ſcenes
Amuſing, chanc'd beſide his reaper-train
To walk, when poor Lavinia drew his eye;
Unconſcious of her power, and turning quick
With unaffected bluſhes from his gaze:
He ſaw her charming, but he ſaw not half
The charms her down-caſt modeſty conceal'd.
That very moment love and chaſte deſire
Sprung in his boſom, to himſelf unknown;
For ſtill the world prevail'd, and its dread langh,
Which ſcarce the firm philoſopher can ſcorn,
Should his heart own a gleaner in the field:
And thus in ſecret to his ſoul he ſigh'd.

" What pity! that ſo delicate a form,
" By beauty kindled where enlivening ſenſe
" And more than vulgar goodneſs ſeem to dwell,
" Should be devoted to the rude embrace
" Of ſome indecent clown! She looks, methinks,
" Of old Acaſto's line; and to my mind
" Recalls that patron of my happy life,
" From whom my liberal fortune took its riſe;
" Now to the duſt gone down; his houſes, lands,
" And once fair-ſpreading family, diſſolv'd.
" 'Tis ſaid that in ſome lone obſcure retreat,
" Urg'd by remembrance ſad, and decent pride,
" Far from thoſe ſcenes which knew their better days,
" His aged widow and his daughter live,
" Whom yet my fruitleſs ſearch could never find.
" Romantic wiſh! would this the daughter were!"

When, ſtrict enquiring, from herſelf he found
She was the ſame, the daughter of his friend,
Of bountiful Acaſto; who can ſpeak
The mingled paſſions that ſurpriz'd his heart,
And thro' his nerves in ſhivering tranſport ran?
Then blaz'd his ſmother'd flame, avow'd and bold;
And as he view'd her, ardent, o'er and o'er,
Love, gratitude, and pity wept at once.
Confus'd and frightened at his ſudden tears,
Her riſing beauties fluſh'd a higher bloom,
As thus Palemon, paſſionate, and juſt,
Pour'd out the pious rapture of his ſoul.

" And

" And art thou then Acaſto's dear remains?
" She, whom my reſtleſs gratitude has ſought,
" So long in vain? O heavens! the very ſame,
" The ſoftened image of my noble friend,
" Alive his every look, his every feature,
" More elegantly touch'd. Sweeter than ſpring!
" Thou ſole ſurviving bloſſom from the root
" That nouriſh'd up my fortune! Say, ah where,
" In what ſequeſter'd deſart, haſt thou drawn
" The kindeſt aſpect of delighted Heaven?
" Into ſuch beauty ſpread, and blown ſo fair!
" Tho' poverty's cold wind, and cruſhing rain,
" Beat keen, and heavy, on thy tender years?
" O let me now, into a richer ſoil,
" Tranſplant thee ſafe! where vernal ſuns, and ſhowers,
" Diffuſe their warmeſt, largeſt influence;
" And of my garden be the pride, and joy!
" Ill it befits thee, oh it ill befits
" Acaſto's daughter, his whoſe open ſtores,
" Tho' vaſt, were little to his ampler heart,
" The father of a country, thus to pick
" The very refuſe of thoſe harveſt-fields,
" Which from his bounteous friendſhip I enjoy.
" Then throw that ſhameful pittance from thy hand,
" But ill apply'd to ſuch a rugged taſk;
" The fields, the maſter, all, my fair, are thine;
" If to the various bleſſings which thy houſe
" Has on me laviſh'd, thou wilt add that bliſs,
" That deareſt bliſs, the power of bleſſing thee!"

Here ceas'd the youth: yet ſtill his ſpeaking eye
Expreſs'd the ſacred triumph of his ſoul,
With conſcious virtue, gratitude, and love,
Above the vulgar joy divinely rais'd.
Nor waited he reply. Won by the charm
Of goodneſs irreſiſtible, and all
In ſweet diſorder loſt, ſhe bluſh'd conſent.
The news immediate to her mother brought,
While, pierc'd with anxious thought, ſhe pin'd away
The lonely moments for Lavinia's fate;
Amaz'd and ſcarce believing what ſhe heard,
Joy ſeiz'd her wither'd veins, and one bright gleam
Of ſetting life ſhone on her evening-hours:
Not leſs enraptur'd than the happy pair;
Who flouriſh'd long in tender bliſs, and rear'd
A numerous offspring, lovely like themſelves,
And good, the grace of all the country round.

ESSAY

ESSAY XXVI.

GOLIAH of GATH.

PASSAGE.

AND DAVID SAID UNTO SAUL, LET NO MAN'S HEART FAIL BECAUSE OF HIM: THY SERVANT WILL GO AND FIGHT WITH THIS PHILISTINE.

IT is very remarkable, that all thoſe perſonages of ſacred memory, whoſe tranſactions are recorded in the biographical parts of the Bible, have diſtinguiſhed themſelves for perſonal bravery in the moſt early periods of life. Thus, Moſes, yet a child, ſmote the Egyptian in defence of his brother; and, in the caſe before us, the youth David, who was, even *before* this time, ſo enchanting a muſician, as to vanquiſh an evil ſpirit by the melody of his harp, commences an illuſtrious and warlike character all at once, by ſubduing the

man

man, of whom, whole armies were afraid, in ſingle combat. This hiſtory, is, likewiſe, fruitful of very fine things, and favourable to the remark of a commentator. There is a ſkill obſervable in the *conduct* of the ſacred narratives rarely, if ever, ſeen in other writings: and it ſhall be the buſineſs of this illuſtration to ſhew, that the chain of *real* circumſtances relating to the duel betwixt David and Goliah, is, from the beginning to the end, from the firſt ſyllable to the laſt, a match for any compoſition whatever—ſetting aſide the matter of *ſcripture*—even in point of what the dramatiſts call *fable*. And I am thus particularly earneſt to diſplay, in this work, the *literary* excellence of the Holy Bible, becauſe I have reaſon to apprehend it is too frequently laid by, under a notion of its being a dull, dry, and unentertaining ſyſtem; whereas the fact is quite otherwiſe: it contains all that can be *wiſhed*, by the trueſt intellectual taſte; it enters more ſagaciouſly, and more deeply, into human nature; it developes character, delineates manner,

manner, charms the imagination, and warms the heart more effectually than any other book extant: and if once a man would take it into his hand, without that ſtrange prejudicing idea of its flatneſs, and be willing to be pleaſed, I am morally certain he would find all his favourite authors dwindle in the compariſon, and conclude, that he was not only reading the moſt religious, but the moſt *entertaining* book in the world.

It is my preſent deſign, therefore, to diſplay the ſtory now under conſideration as a performance, written with the greateſt art, and managed with the moſt maſterly judgment. This will beſt be done, by ſelecting, from the whole matter, particular paſſages, and making a few comments thereupon.

The very exordium of the ſtory preſents us with an image, that prepares us for ſomething extraordinary.

"Saul

"Saul and the men of Iſrael were ga-
"thered together, and pitched by the val-
"ley of Elah, and ſet the battle in array,
"againſt the Philiſtines. And the Philiſ-
"tines ſtood on a mountain on the one
"ſide, and Iſrael ſtood on a mountain on
"the other, and there was a valley *between*
"them." Fancy herſelf could not have imagined any thing more picturesque; nor could any martial ſkill have made a more aweful arrangement. The next circumſtance is as intereſting as unexpected: "And there went out a champion out of "the camp of the Philiſtines, named Go-"liah of Gath." The deſcription of this man is every way ſuited to alarm; and I will be bold to ſay, far tranſcends in equipment the heroes of Homer himſelf. I ſubmit it to all the poetical enthuſiaſts. "His "height was ſix cubits and a ſpan: he had "an helmet of braſs upon his head, and "was armed with a coat of mail; and the "*weight of the coat* was five thouſand "ſheckles of braſs." I muſt here interrupt the narrative, to obſerve, with what

ſkill

ſkill we are told of the *ſtrength* of Goliah. It is not mentioned in the ordinary way, by a recital of his former atchievments, but it is implied by the prodigious burthen he was able to bear upon his back; for, beſides that, "the head of his ſpear weighed *ſix hundred* ſhekles of *iron*," "the "weight of his coat was *five thouſand* "ſhekles of *braſs*." But to go on.

"And he had greaves of braſs upon his "legs, and a target of braſs between his "ſhoulders: and the ſtaff of his ſpear was "like a weaver's beam; and his ſpear's "head weighed ſix hundred ſhekles of "iron; and one bearing a ſhield, went "before him." The terror and conſternation with which this gigantic appearance muſt ſtrike the ſpectators, is much eaſier conceived than it can be deſcribed. All muſt have been ſuſpenſe, and ſilent agitation—the Iſraelites muſt look at the man of Gath, with diſmay; and the Philiſtines muſt have viewed their warrior as the tremendous tower of their ſtrength. His addreſs

dreſs to the armies of the adverſe party, could only ſerve to heighten their apprehenſions, for he defied the whole force of Iſrael, and thirſted for war, as if it were an appetite in him: "Give me a man (ſaid "he), give me a man, that we may fight "together." What a ſanguinary ſentence! it ſmacks of blood and of diſpatch: it ſhews at once, an eagerneſs to deſtroy, and to ſeize a ſecond victim. Even Saul was daunted at the challenge, and in all the tribes of embattled Iſrael (amongſt which were the brothers of David) there could not be found a man to accept it. The unrivalled Philiſtine, in all the arrogance of ſuperiority and triumph, repeated the challenge, morning and evening, for forty days.—About this time, young David was diſpatched by his father Jeſſe to carry proviſions to his brethren in the camp; for this office he was called up from the paſtoral employment of tendence on the flocks. Theſe, he left to the care of another keeper, and went, as he had been commanded; "And he came to the trench as the armies

"of

" of the hoſt were going forth to the fight,
" and were ſhouting for the battle: for
" Iſrael and the Philiſtines had put the bat-
" tle in array, army againſt army."

The ſtripling could not have arrived in a more critical time, nor at any more likely to awake in him the ſparks of glory, eſpecially as his brethren were all engaged in the cauſe. He had ſcarce finiſhed the firſt ſalutations with his brethren, before another matter fell out wonderfully well calculated to kindle the flame of honour; for, while he was converſing with his brethren, there came up the Philiſtine of Gath again, and, with additional inſolence, announced his defiance. The Iſraelites were ſore afraid and ingloriouſly fled. David's brethren, then, related to him, the *former* menace of Goliah, and the promiſes of reward which the king offered to any man who ſhould kill him—that the houſe of the conqueror's father was to be free, and the victor himſelf, to have great riches, and the hand of the king's daughter. How finely is the

nature

nature of envy and warlike ambition touched in the conduct of David's brother, when the lad first shewed the dawnings of his spirit: and this is carried still higher, when Saul himself expresses, afterwards, the jealousy of his heart, at his being called only the Slayer of Thousands, while to David's arm the women ascribed victory over *Tens* of Thousands. But of this in its place. Some strokes of emulation there were in David's discourse, which soon reached the ear of the general, and which procured him an immediate interview. Courage is no respecter of persons: the young man is represented as speaking to Saul, with even more intrepidity than he spake to his brethren. In the first part of his conversation he addresses him upon the subject, with all the ardour of a glowing and independent spirit. He said: "Let no man's heart "fail him, because of this Goliah; thy "*servant*, will go and fight with the Phi- "listine." Modest, but glorious: thy *servant* will, at least, go and *fight* with this presumptuous boaster. It was natural for

Saul

Saul to treat this offer at firſt, as a ſally of juvenile ſpirit, laudable enough, but nothing effectual; and his reply to it muſt have been delivered ſmilingly. Thou, child! Thou are not able to go againſt this Philiſtine, to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, though a brave one; "and "he a man of war from his youth"—from his very infancy, trained to the knowledge and exerciſe of arms. The modeſty, brevity, and conciſeneſs with which our young hero aſſerts his pretentions to ſucceſs from this engagement, is inconceivably pretty, and attracting.

"Thy ſervant kept his father's ſheep, "and there came a lion and a bear, and "took a lamb out of the flock:

"And *I* went out after him, and ſmote "him, and delivered the lamb out of his "mouth, and when he aroſe again, I caught "him by his beard, and ſmote him, and "ſlew him.

"Thy

"Thy ſervant ſlew both, the lion and "the bear: and this uncircumciſed Phi- "liſtine ſhall be one of them, ſeeing he hath "defied the armies of the living God.

"The Lord that delivered me out of "the paw of the lion, and out of the paw "of the bear, he will deliver me alſo out "of the hand of this Philiſtine."*

Saul

* This gallant and modeſt addreſs, attended as it is with every prepoſſeſſing circumſtance, bears ſome reſemblance to the ſtory of young Norval in the Tragedy of Douglas, when he diſplays his heroic ſpirit, and is firſt admitted into the preſence of Lord and Lady Randolph. Perhaps, the author really had the bravery of the conqueror of Goliah in his eye, which is the more likely, as an intimate acquaintance with the ſcriptures, and, no doubt, a veneration for them, was in the way of Mr. Hume's profeſſional ſtudies. At any rate, the ſpeech will read extremely well after that of the ſtripling David, whether it be intended, or accidental, the reſemblance is ſtriking.

My name is Norval: on the Grampian hills
My father feeds his flocks: a frugal ſwain,
Whoſe conſtant cares were to encreaſe his ſtore,
And keep his only ſon, myſelf, at home.
For I had heard of battles, and I long'd

To

Saul was ſo charmed with his bravery and heroic ſentiments, that he began already to hope ſomething from his efforts,

To follow to the field ſome warlike lord;
And Heaven ſoon granted what my ſire denied.
This moon which roſe laſt night, round as my ſhield,
Had not yet fill'd her horns, when, by her light,
A band of fierce barbarians, from the hills,
Ruſh'd like a torrent down upon the vale,
Sweeping our flocks and herds. The ſhepherds fled
For ſafety, and for ſuccour. I alone,
With bended bow, and quiver full of arrows,
Hovered about the enemy, and mark'd
The road he took, then haſted to my friends:
Whom, with a troop of fifty choſen men,
I met advancing. The purſuit I led,
Till we o'ertook the ſpoil-encumber'd foe.
We fought and conquer'd. Ere a ſword was drawn,
An arrow from my bow had pierced their chief,
Who wore that day the arms which now I wear.
Retiring home in triumph, I diſdain'd
The ſhepherd's ſlothful life; and having heard
That our good king had ſummon'd his bold peers
To lead their warriors to the Carron ſide,
I left my father's houſe, and took with me
A choſen ſervant to conduct my ſteps:——
Yon trembling coward who forſook his maſter.
Journeying with this intent, I paſt theſe towers,
And, Heaven-directed, came this day to do
The happy deed that gilds my humble name.

inſomuch,

inſomuch, that he ſaid: "Go, my lad, "and the Lord go with thee." But the preparatory ceremony, which ſucceeded this commiſſion, is moſt beautiful, indeed! Delighted with his generous ambition, Saul, with his own hand and acoutrements, equipped David for the battle; he put an helmet of braſs upon his head, and defended his body with a coat of mail; then, girding his ſword upon his armour, he aſſayed to go—but—touched by ſome ſecret inſpiration—he again diveſted himſelf of the armour, and putting only five ſmooth ſtones out of the brook, he took his ſtaff, his ſcrip, and his ſling, and thus, like a ſhepherd, drew near to the Philiſtine. There is great imagery in the following verſes.

"And the Philiſtine came on, and the "man that bare the ſhield went before "him; and when the Philiſtine looked "about and ſaw David, he *diſdained* him." *Diſdained* is, perhaps, the only word in this language that could have been uſed properly

properly on this occaſion. There was ſo palpable a difference between the combatants, and the ſuperiority and ſtrength evidently lay ſo much on the ſide of Goliah, that he *diſdained* to fight with him, very naturally thinking him no object of *his* ſpear: for David had every perſonal advantage, being a lad of a ruddy and fair countenance.

It never entered into the imagination of the Philiſtine that the battle was not always to the ſtrong, nor the race to the ſwift. The ideas of a more powerful Providence were ſwallowed up in the vanity of his own vigour; and yet that vanity was ſomewhat piqued, when he beheld our daring youth meet him only with a ſtick, and a ſtring. "Am I a dog, that thou comeſt to me with "ſtaves?" This ſoon exaſperated him, and he curſed David by *his own gods*. Whoever examines the ſcriptures, will find the niceſt preſervation of character, each delicately deſcriminated, and ſo admirably contraſted, that nothing which marks one,

is given heterogenouſly, to another. This has alſo been conſidered among the firſt excellencies of compoſition: its beauty is manifeſted in Shakeſpear much, but in the Bible more. An inſtance of this is before us. We never once loſe ſight of the ſavage audacity of Goliah, from his firſt menace to his death—he ſpeaks but little, but every word ſeems to fall from the lip of a giant. When David perſiſts in his reſolution to fight, he ſaid, "Come to me, and I will "give thy fleſh unto the fowls of the air, "and to the beaſts of the field." The dependence of David was upon his God, and in ſuch confidence he returned the threat of Goliah with additional fury. "This "day will the Lord deliver thee into my "hand, and I will ſmite thee, and take "thine head from thee, that all the earth "may know there is a *God* in Iſrael: and "all this aſſembly ſhall know that the Lord "ſaveth not with the *ſword and ſpear*; for "the battle *is the Lord's*, and *he* will give "you into our hands." They engaged, and the propheſy of the young warrior was fulfilled.

fulfilled. The power of the Divine aſſiſtance which can make all human ſtrength more feeble than the ſinews of the new-born babe, is nobly illuſtrated in the death of Goliah, which, notwithſtanding all appearances, was effected by a ſtone ejected by a very boy, from a ſling. But the account itſelf is well worth reciting.

"And it came to paſs, when the Phi-
"liſtine aroſe, and came and drew nigh
"to meet David, that David haſted, and
"ran toward the army to meet the Philiſ-
"tine. And David put his hand in his
"bag, and took thence a ſtone and ſlang
"it, and ſmote the Philiſtine in his fore-
"head, that the ſtone *ſunk* into his fore-
"head; and he fell upon his face unto
"the earth.

"Then he ran and ſtood upon the Phi-
"liſtine, and took the ſword of Goliah,
"and drew it out of the ſheath, and ſlew
"him and cut off his head therewith: and

" when the Philiſtines ſaw their champion
" was dead, they fled."

By ſuch means was the victory completed, and thus fell that terror to the Iſraeliſh bands, Goliah of Gath.

Having gone through the moſt important parts of this intereſting duel, we have leiſure for a few ſupplimental reflections, in the way of literary criticiſm. This Goliah of Gath reminds one of Homer's Ajax; and, indeed, the proceſs of the engagement between the giant and David, is, in many particulars, like the ceremony of the ſingle combat of Telamon and Hector. The above deſcription of Goliah's perſon, and warlike preparations, are more military and formidable than the hero of Homer. Let the foregoing character of the Giant of Gath be compared with what follows:

Now Ajax brac'd his dazzling armour on,
Sheath'd in bright ſteel, the giant warrior ſhone:
He moves to combat with majeſtic pace;

So

So ſtalks in arms, the grizly god of Thrace.
Thus march'd the chief, tremendous as a god:
Grimly he ſmil'd; earth trembled as he ſtrode;
His maſſey javelin, quiv'ring in his hand,
He ſtood the bulwark of the Grecian band.
Thro' ev'ry Argive heart new tranſport ran;
All Troy ſtood trembling at the mighty man;
Ev'n Hector paus'd; and with new doubt oppreſs'd;
Felt his great heart ſuſpended in his breaſt.

Scarce any part of this deſcription, nor of its original, will bear bringing near that of the "giant warrior" of the ſcripture. His moving with majeſtic pace to combat, is leſs terrific than Goliah's triumphant march in the full view of the aſtoniſhed Philiſtines. There ſeems alſo leſs propriety in Hector's *pauſe of fear*, than in the inapprehenſive and intrepid conduct of David, who, though not practiſed like Hector,

From right to left the dextrous lance to wield,
And bear thick battle on his ſounding ſhield;

was, nevertheleſs, uniformly brave and heroic to the very heart, without ever finding that heroiſm ſuſpended, even at the preſence

of Goliah. "All *Troy*" might, indeed, be ſuppoſed to tremble at the mighty ſon of Telamon, in the ſame manner as Saul and the tribes of embattled Iſrael, trembled before the arrogant Philiſtine: but for Hector's heart to fail him, though but for a moment, was, ſurely, ſuch a falling off from the idea we wiſh to entertain of that celebrated hero, that one is almoſt angry with Homer for doing our favourite ſo palpable an injury in the tendereſt and brighteſt part of his character. It may be urged, indeed, that David had confidence in his God, and that his bravery emanated from inſpiration. An argument, very ſimilar, may be brought in favour of the Trojan hero, who, as we are to believe, certainly truſted as much in the virtue of *his* cauſe, and the goodneſs of *his* god, as the other; nor did the poet ever ſuffer him to go to the battle till thoſe deities were firſt ſupplicated. Witneſs the addreſs offered up, on the very occaſion of the conteſt with Ajax.

Oh, Father of mankind, ſuperior lord,
On lofty Ida's holy hill ador'd:

Who

Who in the higheſt Heav'n has fix'd thy throne,
Supreme of gods, unbounded, and alone:
Grant thou, &c.

The ſhield of Ajax is, however, more particularly deſcribed than the ſhield of Goliah.

Stern Telamon, behind his ample ſhield,
As from a brazen tower, o'erlook'd the field.
Huge was its orb, with ſeven thick folds o'ercaſt,
Of tough bull-hides, of ſolid braſs, the laſt.

But the circumſtantial account of the giant's ſpear, the weight of its head, his greaves of braſs, and his target; his coat of mail, and his maſſey helmet, are all ſuch evidences of his aſtoniſhing STRENGTH, and, apparently, invincible vigour, that, without any parade or ſuperfluity of words, they give us the exact image of the ſavage, who called out, in an exclamation, worthy of him, "Give me a man, give me a man, "that we may fight together."

But if, indeed, we expect in any performance to find a character delineated with

parallel force—if we wiſh to read any deſcription like Goliah of Gath, we muſt ſearch for it in the writings of one, whoſe inſpiration was chiefly drawn from the ſources of ſacred compoſition. Milton drank at the fountain-head, and his poetry flowed

——From Siloa's brook,
Faſt by the oracle of God.

The ſublimity with which he has drawn Satan, when

——Front to front he ſtood,
In terrible array,

is ſuch a piece of poetry, and exhibits ſuch an aſſemblage of grand images, as nothing but a genius altogether illimitable could poſſibly furniſh. Long quotations, however, not coming within the deſign or compaſs of this work, I ſhall only preſent ſuch lines as ſhew the Prince of Darkneſs not very unlike—in point of warlike preparation, and perſonal appearance—to the gi-

ant,

ant, who was ſubdued by the youth David; and with theſe verſes we will cloſe the Eſſay.

———Before the cloudy van,
On the rough edge of battle e'er it join'd,
Satan, with vaſt and haughty ſtrides advanc'd,
Came tow'ring, arm'd in Adamant and gold.
———Then on the heads of foes,
Main promontories flung, which in the air
Came ſhadowing. Long time in evil ſcale
The battle hung—Like a god he ſeem'd,
Stood he, or mov'd; in ſtature, motion, arms,
Now wav'd his fiery ſword, and in the air
Made horrid circles. A broad ſun his ſhield,
While expectation ſtood in horror.

ESSAY XXVII.

STORY of ELIJAH and the Widow of ZAREPHATH.

PASSAGE.

AND SHE SAID, AS THE LORD THY GOD LIVETH, I HAVE NOT A CAKE, BUT A HANDFUL OF MEAL IN A BARREL, AND A LITTLE OIL IN A CRUSE.

THIS paſſage is pregnant with pleaſing illuſtrations, being taken from a ſtory inferior to few, if any, in ſacred compoſition: for it not only abounds with moſt agreeable incidents, but furniſhes a ſtriking and conſpicuous moral: the virtue of Gratitude is very emphatically illuſtrated on the one hand, and the duty of Hoſpitality, on the other. Nor has it eſcaped, indeed, the remark of ſeveral writers; but the ſcriptures, as I have before had occaſion to obſerve, are treaſuries affording inexhauſted novelty to their admirers.

The perſons particularly concerned in this ſacred drama, are, Elijah the prophet, and a poor widow-woman, who lived, by very hard and conſtant labour; *ſo* hard indeed, that ſhe was obliged to pick her faggot to light her fire, before ſhe could bake the bread, which that labour had gleaned. At the time of her firſt meeting with Elijah, ſhe was more than *uſually* ſtraightened; for her whole ſtock conſiſted of a handful of meal, and a little oil: and ſhe was then ſtooping, in ſearch of a few ſticks, to dreſs this ſcanty modicum, to preſerve from death, herſelf and her ſon. Yet this was the critical period—even while ſhe was thus *affectionately* employed—this was the moment marked out by Providence, to try the ſtrength of her ſympathy: it was alas! no time to beſtow, while her bounty was thus circumſcribed: nor was it a fit ſeaſon to ſhew the *natural* courteſy of her temper, when ſhe was exerting her laſt efforts in relief of her child, and wanted, in the foreſt degree, the ordinary accommodations of life herſelf. Under this preſ-

ſure

ſure of her circumſtances, it is worth while to ſee how ſhe conducted herſelf. When Elijah the prophet (who figures ſo ſplendidly in ſacred hiſtory) foretold, that a divine puniſhment ſhould alight upon Ahab (a man, who is repreſented as wicked and ill-diſpoſed above all that were before him) then, to eſcape that reſentment, which his prophecy had kindled againſt him in the breaſt of Ahab, he hid himſelf by the brook Cherith, where the *ravens* were commanded to cater for his ſupport, while the brook ſupplied him with drink. The reſource of the ſtream however ſoon failing, he again ſought ſhelter elſewhere, and removed to Zarephath, where he no ſooner arrived, than he beheld this widow-woman engaged, as before deſcribed, in gathering ſticks; and he immediately called to her, and requeſted her to fetch him a little water in a veſſel. This was not unreaſonable; but did not he render it ſomewhat ſo, when he again called her back as ſhe was haſtening to oblige him, to deſire ſhe would bring a morſal of *bread* likewiſe in her hand? A *morſel* of bread

bread, and a *little* water, was, to be ſure, aſking the favour in as decent language as could be; but in this poor woman's particular ſituation, it muſt have had a very important ſound: there is a moſt beautiful diſplay of her charitable heart, in her anſwer.—"As the Lord thy God liveth, I "have *not a cake*, but a handful of meal in "a barrel, and a little oil in a cruſe: and "behold, I am gathering *two* ſticks that "I may go in and dreſs it for me and my "ſon, that we may eat it *and die:*" as if ſhe had ſaid, you ſee my ſtock, ſtranger—it is my very laſt meal—I am picking *two* ſticks that I may lay my poor meal acroſs, and then—(as all further reſources fail)—my child and I will die in the arms of one another. Then it was, that Elijah bid her not fear, for that "the barrel of meal "ſhould not *waſte*, nor the cruſe of oil "*fail* unto the day that the Lord ſendeth "rain upon the face of the earth;" and this he aſſured her, was the ſentiment of God himſelf. Now, had this woman been inclined to ſave her meal and oil to herſelf

—had

—had ſhe been ſwayed, or indeed *ought* influenced by that powerful ſelf-love which has ſo general an aſcendency in the human breaſt; or had ſhe even yielded to the force of thoſe *prudent* maxims which teach, that, charity begins at *home*, and that ſelf-preſervation is *nature's firſt law*, how eaſily might ſhe have evaded this requeſt? nay, what a ſwarm of right, ſound apologies preſented themſelves for a fair denial! To the reaſons already urged ſhe might (had ſhe been a woman of the world) have added many others: ſuch as the expecting condition in which ſhe left her half-famiſhed *child*—her *own* extreme hunger, and the *piety* of preſerving herſelf and her little one, as long as ſhe could poſſibly find the ſmalleſt means of ſubſiſtance. That to die, while yet a meal remained, would be a kind of *ſuicide*; and to give a morſel from any part of her own family, when a morſel was all that was left for the ſupport of *two*, would be a prodigality for which ſhe *ought* to ſuffer the poverty that muſt inevitably reſult from it. As to its being, as he ſaid,

the

the command of the *Almighty*, ſhe might reaſonably offer a doubt as to the *truth* of that particular. Is there not—ſhe might reply—is there not, ſomething of inconſiſtency, good ſtranger, in this part of your ſtory? That we ſhould *aſſiſt one another*, is, I know a ſocial and a religious duty; but this muſt be where plenty, or at leaſt competence, preſents us with the delightful *power*.—It is not indeed ſurprizing that I, (being the firſt perſon you have ſeen) ſhould be the firſt addreſſed on this occaſion, becauſe I know hunger catches at the ſlighteſt and neareſt poſſibilities: but excuſe me, if I think the matter of the promiſed *miracles* not a little problematical. Would God have directed your application to a poor *defenceleſs* widow-woman, who has a fatherleſs child to toil for, and is now labouring in the laſt exigency.—Would he have ſaid—let her divide her all with you? Would *He*, who knows human nature ſo intimately, and who never expects us to injure *ourſelves on any ſcore whatever*. —Would *He* have me liſten to that which

ſounds

ſounds ſo like the trick of a needy traveller, and ſhall I credulouſly give my ſtaff from my hand in expectation of another dropping down from Heaven?—No—friend—I underſtand ſomething of this world; and though I admire to *do good*, I muſt not expoſe myſelf to *ridicule*—for if I was to comply with your requeſt, tell me honeſtly wouldſt thou not laugh at my weakneſs? Farewell then, and be aſſured, I lament my inability as much as thou lamenteſt thy neceſſity.

Having thus ſhewn what a very cautious woman *might* have ſaid: let us now ſee what *was* really the ſentiment of the occaſion. There is no other anſwer recorded than that ſhe *did* according to the deſire of Elijah. She did not even ſtay to expatiate upon her *own generoſity*—nor tell him, that if his prophecy ſhould be *unfulfilled*, ſhe muſt only ſtarve ſo much the ſooner for her good nature; but, ſhe relied ſo implicitly on his ſincerity, and obeyed ſo willingly the inſpired impulſe of benevolence, that

that ſhe haſted to make a little cake for Elijah *firſt*, and then attended to the wants of her little one and herſelf. But this courteſy and confidence was preternaturally rewarded: for ſhe and he, *and her houſe*, eat many days; "and the barrel of meal "waſted not, nor did the cruſe of oil "fail."

Elijah now became a lodger in the widow's houſe, and was conſidered as a part of her family, till a ſuſpicious circumſtance fell out, which gave her at firſt but too much reaſon to alter her opinion of him. Soon after this friendſhip was formed between them, the ſon of the hoſteſs fell ſick, and his ſickneſs was of ſo ſore a nature, that it preſently terminated in his death. The unhappy mother attributed it to ſome ſecret exertion of cruel power in Elijah; for as he could divine *one* miracle in her favour, ſo ſhe apprehended he might be able to effect *another* to her prejudice: However, certain it is, ſhe entertained ideas exceedingly to his diſcredit, and indeed,

ſteemed

eſteemed the thing ſo very ungrateful a return for her fair conduct and demeanour, that we find her reproaching him with all the ſeverity of an ill-intreated friend, and all the diſtraction of an injured parent. "What "have I to do with thee—thou man of "God! art thou come unto me, to call "my ſin to my remembrance, and to ſlay "my ſon?" This appears to have been ſpoken with the utmoſt bitterneſs of *irony*, as if ſhe had ſaid:—Thou man, who pretendeſt to have been directed hither by the expreſs orders of God:—Thou meſſenger from the Lord of Heaven—what have I done unto thee, that thou ſhouldeſt thus requite me?—Doſt thou do this to warn me how I ſhare again my laſt meal with a ſtranger? True it is, that thou haſt in one inſtance been found faithful: true, that thou haſt prolonged the lives which ſeemed to be drawing ſooner to a period. But what of that—Haſt thou taken this opportunity to render the mourning of the widow thus additionally *ſore*, by firſt conveying to her, the joyful tidings of plenty, only

only to make the after-ſtroke the more intolerable, by ſlaying her dear and only darling; even him, whom the famine hath ſpared? Inhuman! ſhame upon thee! for this—ſhall the widow's curſe purſue thee for ever: for this—but I cannot ſpeak. Behold, the innocent victim of your barbarity—behold—my child is breathleſs before you.—Alas! my ſon—my ſon! how haſt thou been ſacrificed to the inſidiouſneſs of a ſtranger! It was highly in character to reprove him in this manner; and it is equally natural, that the good man ſhould *feel* the reproof with all imaginable ſeverity. Many circumſtances concurred to make him truly wretched, even under ſuch an *imputation:* for he doubtleſs conſidered her in the tendereſt degree, as his beſt benefactor—as one who had manifeſted the *ſenſibility* and *duty* of her heart, in the very criſis, both of *his* fate and her *own*; and laſtly, as a widow, whoſe life was wrapt up in the life of her ſon. Nor could he indeed fairly blame her ſuſpicions. Since the time, the place, and the ſuddeneſs of the

the lad's death, gave in ſome ſort, a colour of probability to them. Her miſery too, had its ſource ſo near the ſoul, that he could not attempt either to check or to chide it; advice would have been rejected, and pity impertinent: he troubled her with neither; but taking the baby corpſe out of the mother's boſom, where (though it was dead) ſhe was ſtill careſſing and ſtill cradling it, he carried it up to his own apartment, and laid him gently upon his own bed.

And now being at liberty to addreſs the God who had ſo often, and ſo miraculouſly befriended and indulged, and honoured him, he broke out into the moſt earneſt ſupplication. "Oh Lord my God, my "God, haſt thou brought evil upon the "widow with whom I ſojourn, by ſlay-"ing her ſon? I pray thee, that the "child's ſoul may come into him again." The prayer was heard. In the mean time, in what a ſituation muſt he have left the afflicted parent! it was however, one of

thoſe

thoſe ſorrows which are compenſated by a reverſe of joy: the tranſition was almoſt inſtantaneous; for when the babe began to revive, he brought it down out of the chamber into the houſe, and delivered it into the deſiring arms of its weeping mother. Were words ever calculated to expreſs ſuch a ſtroke of tranſport? it muſt have been a bliſs which trod hard upon the very heels of agony. Parents may, perhaps, paint it to themſelves: they may ſee (through the mirror of a ſympathetic fancy) the poor widow receiving her child from the healing hand of the prophet—a child freſh blooming in the beauties of a *ſecond* birth.—They may imagine they behold the joyful woman as it were in a frenzy of felicity, kneeling, firſt to the *inviſible reſtorer*, then to Elijah, and laſt bathing the cheek of the child with tears of tenderneſs, unutterable. The prophet, indeed, ſaid little; for language was unneceſſary; the thing ſpoke for itſelf, the lovely eye was again gently opened on the light, the dimple reſumed its reſidence, and all its little

ſenſibilities

ſenſibilities were fully reſtored. "See" cried Elijah,—"thy ſon *liveth*." He ſubmitted the truth of the aſſertion (without any tedious explanation of the means by which the recovery had been effected) to the pleaſing evidence of her own ſenſes. He had now fully rewarded her former kindneſs, and evinced his gratitude for the diviſion of her *laſt meal*, by raiſing the treaſure of her ſoul, even from the dead. I ſhall ſay no more on this charming ſtory, but juſt obſerve, that every gentle heart will have its own commentary, and purſue the hints I have given, till they have long indulged themſelves in the elegant reflection which ſo maſterly and intereſting a ſcene excites.

ESSAY XXVIII.

CHARACTER of SOLOMON.

PASSAGE.

AND JUDAH AND ISRAEL DWELT SAFELY, EVERY MAN, UNDER HIS VINE, AND UNDER HIS FIG-TREE, FROM DAN, EVEN TO BEER-SHEBA, ALL THE DAYS OF SOLOMON.

THERE is, perhaps, as much moral ſenſe, and literary beauty, compriſed in this paſſage, as ever was conveyed to the human underſtanding, by the hand of tradition. What a paradiſaical picture does it give us of the reign of Solomon! Majeſty and mildneſs, power and pleaſure, ſeem to have been the grand ſupporters of his throne: and we read the hiſtory of his times, with a mixture of joy and admiration.

The very firſt inſtance of his wiſdom, gave to mankind the moſt delightful earn-

eſt of what might be expected from him. I ſpeak of his judgment betwixt the two harlots. How finely did he diſtinguiſh the ſimplicity of natural ſorrow, from the whineing complaint of advantitious woe: he ſaw the real parent, in her fears, her wiſhes, and her tears; and he detected the impoſture, by every action. The beginning of the reign exhibits this illuſtrious heir of the noble David in all the glory of ſublunary greatneſs; "For he had domi-"nion over all the region, on this ſide the "river, from Tiphſhah, even to Azzah, "over all the kings on this ſide the river:" and in the midſt of ſo extenſive an authority, he maintained peace on all ſides around him: "Every man dwelt ſafely under his "vine, and under his fig-tree," from one end of his realms to the other, "from Dan "even to Beer-ſheba."

What a proſpect was here for the people! What a joyful promiſe for the public heart! But with what energy—I had almoſt ſaid—enchantment—is the diſpoſi-

tion

tion of this prince characterized in the ſubſequent verſe?

"And God gave Solomon wiſdom and "underſtanding, exceeding much, and "*largeneſs of heart*, even as the ſand that "is on the ſea ſhore."

He had, it ſeems, not only the greateſt wealth, but the niceſt judgment, and the nobleſt inclination, to diſtribute that wealth, to make it conducive to general felicity. He equalled his father in his poetical capacity, and even ſurpaſſed him as a moraliſt: his ſongs are marked by an enthuſiaſm, a tenderneſs, and a pathos, in which all the treaſures of the warmeſt, gayeſt, and ſublimeſt imagination, appear to have been exhauſted. Image and metaphor were equally at his command; and a genius, ſo etherial, is ſometimes diſcovered in theſe ſallies of his pen, that his conception takes a flight too lofty for the *eye* to *reach* him. But, however amazing the powers of his *fancy*, they were, at leaſt, equalled by the

graver abilities of his *judgment*. He, by no means, figured leſs as a moral writer: for, his Proverbs are a collection of conciſe maxims, which ſtand, altogether unrivalled; and are the foundation of all thoſe ſhort, multitudinous remarks, which have been iſſued from the preſs, ſince his time: but thoſe of Solomon will, indeed, be ever ſeparated from all others. Such knowledge of life, ſuch various beauty in the expreſſion—ſuch aſtoniſhing terſeneſs in the ſtyle—ſuch poignancy in the ſatire—ſuch purity in the phraſe, and ſuch ſolidity in the ſenſe, *entitled* their author to the immortality which he claims, and which he poſſeſſes.

There ſeems to have been a epocha in his genius: his compoſitions preſent us with a climax. From the Poet, he riſes to the Moraliſt, and from the Moraliſt he ſoars to the Divine. The book of Eccleſiaſtes, is one of the fineſt ſyſtems, or bodies of divinity. Every ſentence is ſound and orthodox. His obſervations are accurate

rate and devotional; and the whole book well becomes the preacher and the pulpit. In a word, Solomon was the greateſt and moſt general literary character that ever wrote. As a prince, he was amiable, beloved, and popular; and it is impoſſible to give a more pleaſing aſſurance of it, than the pacific and tranquil idea ſuggeſted by the text: "Every man dwelt in ſafety "under his own vine and fig-tree, even *all* "the days of Solomon." It is ſomewhat painful to view him in a religious light. Ah, Solomon, thou wiſeſt of the wiſe—how couldeſt thou, at any time, forget the power who had dealt by thee in ſo liberal a manner? eminent alike, in intellect, and in magnificence, how couldſt thou ſo ſtain thy annals, as to turn aſide from the author of all thy greatneſs? How couldſt thou ſo diſgrace——ſo proſtitute the ſplendour of that temple which thou hadſt reared and dedicated to the true God, to the dreams and weakneſſes of idolatry? What, alas, could the viſionary goddeſs of the Zidonians do for thee? What could Molech,

or Aſhtoreth, that deſerved thy devotion, or ſacrifices? Could they inſpire thee with intelligence above all others, and ſtore thy mind with all the ornaments of taſte and ſcience, and elegance and joy?

One apology, however, not a little mitigating, preſents itſelf. He did not yield to this infatuation till he was in the decline of life—poſſibly, when his faculties were ſomewhat impared—and when the ill advice of thoſe who were about him, eſpecially his concubines, teazed him into error. The power of a bad woman, who has any hold upon the heart, is unlimited, and will generally render pliable to its purpoſes, not only the fineſt head, but the fineſt heart: and it muſt be alſo remembered, that the ſtrength of the tender paſſions is always in proportion to the ſtrength of the genius; ſo that Soloman might be led, as it were, captive, in the bonds of love, and ſacrifice to Chemoſh, not becauſe he venerated that imaginary deity, but to avoid the perſecution of the female party, which

was

was formed aganſt his religious integrity. At all events, let us not be too rigid, to degrade ſo great a character. It is well known, that the wiſeſt men, are the moſt frequently ſeduced into the *weakeſt treſpaſſes*. With all his ſagacity, Solomon was a human creature. Great ſenſibility is liable to great miſtake: where we cannot *defend* his conduct, let us *avoid* it, and where we are ſtruck with the ſplendour of his capacity, let it inſpire us with a modeſt imitation.

ESSAY XXIX.

CONCLUDING STRICTURES.

On SCRIPTURAL SUBLIMITY and BEAUTY.

PASSAGE.

HE WAS HONOURED IN THE MIDST OF THE PEOPLE, IN HIS COMING OUT OF THE SANCTUARY.

THE elegant Mr. Burke *, with his uſual ingenuity, obſerves, that *magnificence* is a ſource of the ſublime: after commenting upon which, he proceeds to illuſtate his precepts by ſuitable examples, amongſt which is that of the above paſſage, and thoſe *others* ſucceeding it, which belong to the deſcription. It was with great

* Treatiſe on the Sublime and Beautiful.

propriety he fixed upon this noble panegyric, on the high prieſt Simon the ſon of Onias, as a ſpecimen of ſcriptural ſublimity, in the richneſs of imagery, and alluſion. But I cannot agree with him in thinking *that* ſublimity ariſes from a profuſion of thoſe images in which the mind is ſo dazzled as to make it impoſſible to attend to that exact coherence and agreement of the alluſions, which we ſhould require on every other occaſion. With due deference to Mr. Burke, I will venture to ſay, that, *moſt* of the alluſions *are* exact, and coherent. The proof is before us. Read the whole deſcription.

"How was he honoured in the midſt
"of the people, in his coming out of the
"ſanctuary! He was as the morning ſtar
"in the midſt of a cloud, and as the moon
"at the full: as the ſun ſhining upon the
"temple of the Moſt High, and as the
"rainbow giveth light in the bright clouds:
"and as the flower of roſes in the ſpring of
"the year: as lilies by the rivers of waters,
"and

" and as the frankincenſe-tree in ſummer;
" as fire and incenſe in the cenſer; and as a
" veſſel of gold ſet with precious ſtones;
" as a fair olive-tree budding forth fruit;
" and as a cypreſs which groweth up to
" the clouds.—When he put on the robe
" of honour, and was cloathed with the
" perfection of glory, when he went up to
" the holy altar, he made the garment of
" holineſs honourable. He himſelf ſtood
" by the hearth of the altar compaſſed with
" his brethren round about, as a young
" cedar in Libanus, and as palm-trees com-
" paſſed they him about. So were all the
" ſons of Aaron in their glory, and the
" oblations of the Lord in their hands,
" &c."

It was the intention of the ſon of Sirach, in theſe ſentences, to ſet forth his object with all the advantages of language. Poetry and oratory were equally ſolicited to animate and to adorn the portrait of the prieſt: in conſequence of which, he is attended from the ſanctuary to the altar, by

all the images and inſtruments of the Sublime and Beautiful. Behold him thus ſurrounded—examine the whole ſcene as it paſſes before your eye, and you will pronounce it uniformly admirable. He is deſcribed as coming out of the ſanctuary amidſt the acclamations of the people. The word *honoured*, is a moſt dignified addition to the greatneſs of his character—Let us, for a moment, leave out this ſingle word, and ſee how the idea diminiſhes: "He was in the midſt of the people in his "coming out of the ſanctuary." How poor! Reſtore to the ſentence its full compliment, and the deſign of the writer, as well as the excellence of the object, is complete. "He was *honoured* in the very "midſt of the people." The next alluſion carries him higher ſtill. "He was as "the morning ſtar in the midſt of a cloud." No ſooner was he out of the ſanctuary, than his noble and majeſtic figure was diſtinguiſhable from the reſt of the multitude, "as the morning ſtar in the midſt of a "cloud." The alluſion to the *cloud*, hath alſo

alſo the advantage of a double *propriety*, being, in a metaphorical ſenſe, aptly deſigned to repreſent the thickneſs, and duſky appearance of the admiring multitude. Some of the ſucceeding alluſions were admitted to give the high prieſt the qualities of *amiableneſs*, as well as *grandeur*. "He was as the *flower* of roſes in the *ſpring* "of the year: as lilies by the *rivers of* "*waters*; and as the frankincenſe-tree in "ſummer." All theſe are expreſſive rather of *lovelineſs* than *magnificence*, and are connected, rather, with the *Beautiful*, than with the *Sublime*. Yet, mark how they are heightened, and what ſuperior attractions they poſſeſs, by certain delicate ſtrokes, not to be ſeen in the ordinary ſketches of common poets. *Theſe* would have thought it ſufficient to have compared him to roſes, lilies, and the frankincenſe-tree. Not ſo the ſon of Sirach. He painted the ſon of Onias with more exquiſite colouring—he drew him with a more maſterly pencil. The roſes to which he was compared, were the roſes of the

the *ſpring*, a ſeaſon of the year when thoſe flowers are more particularly ſweet and captivating—the lilies, which, in a figurative ſenſe, reſembled him, were thoſe which derived more elegance from their ſituation by the *rivers of waters*, and, whatever perfumes belong to the frankincenſe-tree, our poet preſented it to us, in the pride of *ſummer*, when its beauties would naturally be in bloſſom. Beſides this, there appears a coherence in theſe alluſions, which may eſcape us at firſt. They ſeem to aim at the diſplay of the *moral* character of the high prieſt. "A good name," ſays the ſcripture, "ſmelleth *ſweet*." How proper, therefore, is Simon compared to the fragrance of roſes, and other odoriferous ſhrubs. Lilies have ever been emblematic of innocence, and purity. The *agreement* of the alluſion is, therefore, exact here alſo. Thus might I proceed to obſerve the moral as well as deſcriptive propriety of comparing him with the reſt. But it is wholly unneceſſary. The abrupt and animated tranſition from one image to another, in this

this deſcription, are ſo many noble inſtances of the Sublime and Beautiful. What a divine glow, and what incomparable dignity is offered to us in the following paſſage, where the figures are changed, and the alluſions altered in a moment. When he put on the robe of honour, and was cloathed with the *perfection* of glory; when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of *holineſs honourable*.—Had Longinus been now to reviſe his golden treatiſe, he would aſſuredly have inſerted this paſſage amongſt his examples of the genuine Sublime; becauſe it boaſts of every property, which, agreeable to his own definition, belongs thereto.

"That" ſays he, "is grand and lofty, "which the more we conſider, the greater "ideas we conceive of it: *whoſe* force we "cannot poſſibly withſtand; which immediately ſinks deep, and makes ſuch impreſſions on the mind, as cannot eaſily "be worn out or effaced." Never were theſe precepts better illuſtrated than by the deſcription

deſcription of Simon the ſon of Onias. The more we conſider him, the greater is our conception of his grandeur, his virtue, and the veneration which attends it. From the time that he iſſues from the ſanctuary amidſt the honours of the people, to his ſtanding by the "altar compaſſed by his "brethren," he riſes upon us with a force and a ſuperiority, which "cannot poſſibly "be withſtood," and which makes upon the mind an indelible impreſſion. In vain ſhall we look amongſt other poets and orators for a rival deſcription ſo excellent throughout.

Mr. Burke *, indeed, hath brought one from

* All furniſh'd, all in arms,
All plum'd like oſtriches, that with the wind
Baited like eagles, having lately bathed;
As full of ſpirits as the month of May,
As gorgeous as the ſun in midſummer,
Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls,
I ſaw young Harry with his beaver on
Riſe from the ground like feathered Mercury;
And vaulted with ſuch eaſe into his ſeat
As if an angel dropped from the clouds
To turn, and wind a fiery Pegaſus.

from an author * the moſt likely to furniſh it: but, although ſome of the alluſion may be equal, others are very much inferior, and taken upon the *whole*, cannot bear the brightneſs of the compariſon.

I have already obſerved, that the *deſcriptions* of Oſſian breathe ſometimes, a ſublimity truly ſcriptural; and I have already, in a former eſſay, given an inſtance.

But as was before noted, when parallel paſſages are produced by way of compariſon from the ſcriptures, the pictures of the author of Fingal are only in *ſhadow*, and muſt ever ſtand in the *back ground* of criticiſm. The following alluſions would be very capital, if the imagination of the reader had not been previouſly charmed by thoſe which have been the ſubject of our preſent Eſſay.

" Far before the reſt, the ſon of Oſſian
" comes; bright in the ſmiles of youth,
" fair

* Shakeſpear.

"fair as the firſt beams of the ſun. His "long hair waves on his back: his dark "brow is half hid beneath his helmet: the "ſword hangs looſe on the hero's ſide: and "his ſpear glitters as he moves: I fled from "his terrible eye." This is intereſting, warm, and warlike; but I again refer every reader of taſte to the text. The ſacred penmen ſurpaſs *all writers*, generally ſpeaking, in point of figure, ſentiment, alluſion, narration, and every other property of perfect compoſition. Diſtributed up and down the Old and New Teſtament, there a thouſand paſſages more than I have now leiſure to contemplate, which utterly annihilate any thing that can be brought from the ſtores of ancient or modern learning.—I conclude theſe little ſketches, which are only intended as an introduction to more, with the ſelection of a few paſſages from different parts of thoſe moſt admirable volumes.

"O Lord my God thou art very great, "thou art cloathed with honour and ma-"jeſty: who covereſt thyſelf with light as

"with

" with a garment: who ſtretcheſt out the " Heavens like a curtain: who layeth the " beams of his chambers in the waters: " who maketh the clouds his chariot: " who walketh upon the wings of the wind. " Thou coveredſt it with the deep as with " a garment: the waters ſtood above the " mountains—at thy rebuke they fled; at " the voice of thy thunder they haſted " away."—What inexpreſſible ſublimity in every one of theſe thoughts, and with how much accuracy the diction is adapted to diſplay them! What ideas can exceed thoſe of the Deity's covering himſelf in a mantle of light, mounting his cloudy chariot, and walking on the wings of the wind?

The *aſcending ſeries*, is in this paſſage, very judiciouſly preſerved; the whole ſentiment is a glorious gradation from *great*, to greater, and from that to the laſt poſitive degree of the climax. I beg the reader to mark the riſe of the expreſſions as he repeats them. There is alſo a particular beauty here, in the ſudden tranſition from

from one perſon to another—"*Who* walketh "upon the wings of the wind;" and then inſtantly altering the addreſs to—"*Thou* "coveredſt it with a deep as with a gar-"ment."

But a ſecond example courts our admiration, and that of ſo high and exalted a nature, that a reader of true taſte, and a real ſenſe of religion, will hardly bear to engage his time in looking at minor or modern authors; while *ſome*, probably, who have been prejudiced againſt the Bible, will be ſurprized to find ſuch admirable, and unequalled writing in a book, which they have been taught to conſider as a dull, unintereſting code of maxims, proverbs, and ordinary ſentiments.

"Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit?
"Or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence?
"If I aſcend up into into Heaven, thou art
"there: If I make my bed in Hell, be-
"hold, thou art there. If I take the wings
"of the morning, and dwell in the utter-
"moſt

" moſt parts of the ſea: even there ſhall
" thy hand lead me, and thy right hand
" ſhall hold me. If I ſay, ſurely the dark-
" neſs ſhall cover me, even the night ſhall
" be light about me. Yea, the darkneſs
" hideth not from thee; but the night
" ſhineth as the day: the darkneſs and the
" light are both alike to thee." In ſhort, this, and various other portions of the ſacred books, as infinitely exceed Homer, as Homer ſurpaſſes Blackmore. There is a verſe or two uſed in the burial of the dead (than which there never was a ſublimer, more ſerious, or more ſuitable ceremony). Oſſian hath alſo touched the ſame ſubject, but the ſacred writer hath ten times the ſimplicity, and is abundantly more correct in the metaphors; beſides that, the alluſions are truer to nature and familiar life.

" A thouſand years in thy ſight, O Lord,
" are but as yeſterday: ſeeing that is paſt
" as a watch in the night. As ſoon as
" thou ſcattereſt them, they are even as a
" ſleep, and fade away ſuddenly, like the
" graſs.

"graſs. In the morning it is green and "groweth up; but in the evening it is "cut down, dried up, and withered."

Were we to run the parallel between this paſſage and that quoted from Oſſian, the inferiority of the latter would, perhaps, not be very agreeable to the admirers of that picturesque bard. To ſpeak impartially, it is ſcarcely giving any prophane writers, however popular, fair play, in comparing them with thoſe Sublime, Beautiful, and Pathetic compoſitions, which are the objects of the preſent volume: on the other hand, thoſe compoſitions themſelves, have ſo ſeldom fair play ſhewn to *them*, while many flimſy, frivolous, or bombaſtic performances, run away with the huzza of the multitude, and having had the laſh of juſtice in hand, it was but right to uſe it a little; eſpecially as it formed an important part of my ſubject, to vindicate the Scriptures from negligence, and to hold them up as the patterns of purity, perſpicuity, and all the ſources of the *true Sublime*.

Theſe

Theſe ſources branch out, according to Longinus, into the following diviſions:

" I. The *firſt* and moſt excellent of theſe " is a boldneſs and grandeur in the *thoughts*.

" II. The *ſecond* is called the *Pathetic*, " or the power of raiſing the paſſions to a " violent and even enthuſiaſtic degree; " and theſe two being genuine conſtituents " of the *Sublime*, are the gifts of nature, " whereas the other ſorts depend in ſome " meaſure upon art.

" III. The *third* conſiſts in a ſkilful ap- " plication of *figures*, which are twofold, " of ſentiment and language.

" IV. The *fourth* is a noble and grace- " ful manner of *expreſſion*, which is not " only to chooſe out ſignificant and elegant " words, but alſo to adorn and embelliſh " the ſtyle, by the aſſiſtance of *tropes*.

" V. The

"V. The *fifth* ſource of the *Sublime*, "which completes all the preceding, is the "*ſtructure* or compoſition of all the periods, "in all poſſible dignity and grandeur."

It hath been my endeavour in this work, to *try* certain paſſages in the SACRED WRITINGS, by the teſt of Longinus's principles. I ſhall account myſelf ſingularly fortunate if ſuch endeavours have, in any degree, done a ſervice to compoſitions, which are ſo able to ſupport the trial; but whoſe beauties and ſublimities, though thickly ſcattered through almoſt every page, are ſo ſhamefully neglected, or miſunderſtood, merely, it is feared, becauſe they are of a devotional, as well as of a poetical nature.

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THE END.